PRICE TWO SHILLINGS

Richard Cable

By the Author of "John Herring"

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RICHARD CABLE

THE LIGHTSHIPMAN

BY THE AUTHOR OF

'MEHALAH' 'JOHN HERRING' 'COURT ROYAL'

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RICHARD CABLE.

CHAPTER I.

THE LIGHTSHIP.

In the cabin of a lightship off the Essex coast sat Richard Cable, knitting a baby's sock or boot. The sock was small, so small that when he thrust his great thumb into it, his thumb filled it.

'Thirteenth row,' said Richard Cable. 'One, two, three, four,' he began aloud, and went from four to forty-seven in decreasing tone, reaching finally an inaudible whisper. Then he raised his voice again: 'Two together; one, two, three, four, five, six. Two together; one, two, three, four.' His tones died away again. He moved his lips; but no sound issued from them till he reached forty-seven, and that he uttered as if it exploded on his lips. Richard Cable was a fine, strongly-built, well-proportioned man, about half-way between thirty and forty, with brown curly hair, and eyes of clear blue. His face was tanned with exposure; but the nape of his neck, as visible, now that his head was bent over the knitting-needles, was of a nutty brown, many degrees redder than his face. He wore a knitted blue worsted jersey, with a pair of thick, warm, dark-blue loose trousers beneath and below the jersey. On his head was a round, brimless sailor's cap, with ribbons behind. He had shoes on his feet and white stockings.

Although he was about thirty-five, he had all the freshness of youth about him, and not a trace of care, not the furrow of a trial on his honest brow. The mouth was firm; but as he

knitted he smiled with the most pleasant smile. His face was agreeable, kindly, open; however roughened by wind and spray, its expression was gentle, now especially so, as it was turned to the baby-sock.

'Fourteenth row,' said Cable, 'plain.—Darn the boy! I wish he were back.'

Cable was not on deck; he was, as already said, in his cabin, and the light fell on him from above. When he raised his eyes, he could see the blue sky through the deck-lights; and across the strip of blue sky, white flakes of clouds were flying fast, like swans and Brent geese on their autumnal migration.

'Fifteenth row. One, two, three, four.' Cable began very loud, but went *diminuendo* as he progressed. He also emphasised the first few numbers; but he slurred over the next, and only recovered emphasis at the last. When he came to forty-seven, he changed the position of his feet, and said: 'Knit two together. One, two, three, four. Two together. —Darn him! What creatures boys are to eat; who'd ever thought of his gorging all the bread! 'Tis too provoking to have to send for more.'

The lightship lay about four miles off the shore, the low flat shore of Essex, near the little fishing-port of Hanford, a port so insignificant, carrying on so little trade, that Trinity House ignored it, and would do nothing for it, not even concern itself about the entrance to the harbour, and take on it the charge of the lightship. This vessel was stationed where it was, manned, and supplied by the Hanfordites. It was a convenience to them, that is, to the oyster and fishing vessels which put out from the little place on Monday and came home on Saturday.

The sea on the Essex coast is shallow, so shallow that it cannot form a wave on the margin large enough to sweep away the frail dike that has been thrown up to oppose further invasion.

Through the shallows outside Hanford ran one deep line of water, and at the entrance to this lay the lightship. The coast-line was marked in that random in-and-out course which prevails in hedge demarcation inland; land was divided from water in a loose and arbitrary fashion, without the existence of any physical reason why one patch should be accounted land and another sea. What was arable was arable only because it lay behind the dike; and on the other side of the

bank were acres of land as good that might have been reclaimed. There were three stages in which the soil stood: for a mile out seaward were flats on which grew seaweed, overwashed by every tide; nearer land, in creeks and estuaries, were flats of the same soil that grew thrift and sea-lavender and glasswort, and where occasionally sheep were sent to browse. These patches were only covered at very high tides. Then came the seawall; and behind that was pasture and arable land, and the water only swept over the bank upon it once in ten, fifteen, or twenty years, when high-tide coincided with an inshore gale.

The outer flats grew their own crops; but the crops were distinctively marine, a long ribbon weed and winkles. After every gale, the weed and countless winkles were swept ashore in black wreaths, and the weed whitened in the sun to a thin ash-like film.

'Sixteenth row, knit plain.'

On the seaface of the seawall a strip of sand and gravel ran the length of the coast, varying in width from a foot to half-a-dozen yards. Between this beach and the clay beds lay a depression, scooped by the retreating current as the tide went out, filled with black slime, formed of decomposed seaweed and winkles, dead crabs, and all the refuse of the sea that it washed up and could not withdraw again. The flats grown over with winkles, thick as daisies in a meadow, formed a happy hunting-ground for boys and girls alike, who went out on them with 'splashers' on their feet to gather shellfish. The splasher is a flat board fastened to the foot; on it the mud can be traversed by human beings as easily as by web-footed aquatic birds.

'Seventeenth row! One, two—— Drat that boy!'

Richard Cable stood up, laid his knitting down on a locker and went on deck. He looked landwards. A line of foam marked where the deep sea broke over the submerged banks of clay. A glare of sun was on a belt of willows, that seemed white, against a gloomy mass of vapour that hung on the horizon. The trees were five or six miles distant; but they were perfectly visible, and looked against the dark background like tufts of cotton-grass.

'Ah!' said Richard Cable, 'there he comes. I can see the boat. If he don't look smart, the squall will be on him and capsize him before he gets here.'

The lightship was rolling and straining. The wind was

rising. From the bed of black cloud lines extended, shadow-rays over the sky. The sea seemed to be uneasy, and had become fretful. The brightness was gone from the day, the colour from the water.

'Darn the boy!' said Cable, looking aloft. 'We shall have dirty weather on us in ten minutes, and he not here.' Then he returned to the cabin and resumed the knitting-pins and the little sock. He had done the tiny foot; he put his fingers into it and turned it about and looked at it. The fellow was already done, in white wool, and lay on a polished ash-wood stool. He took it up and measured the sole of the sock he was knitting by the other foot. 'Right you are,' he said; then, after a pause: 'By ginger! it does seem a time to be away from the little 'uns—a whole fortnight. I don't know how I should manage it, if I hadn't the knitting of their socks and stockings to keep me in mind of their little pattering feet. What a beauty the baby is! That she is indeed, and nobody can deny it! Then he sighed. 'Poor Polly!' and he wiped his eye with the sole of the little sock he was knitting. 'Drat it!' said he; 'I've dropped a stitch. Eighteenth row. First two together. Lord! what wonderful little toes the baby has got. They're like a row of peas in a pod, only no green about them, pink instead; and then, the little nails! what mites they be, to be sure, not half-quarter so big as one of my stitches. And to see the way the baby works his toes, just as though he'd be as handy with them as with fingers. This little pig went to market; this little pig stayed at home; this little pig had roast beef—— No! Baby hasn't got to that pitch of reason and understanding that she can count her toes and take in all about the pigs. She's not equal to Pat-a-cake Baker's man yet. What a pleasure it will be when she's old enough to laugh at Pat-a-cake!—Darn the boy! Not here yet, and the gale is on us.'

The ship was struck by a great wave, and a blast of wind screamed over it.

'He's been dawdling, that he has. He ought to have been back with the bread an hour agone. What a plague boys are! It's a mystery how ever reliable, sensible men grow out of such untrustworthy louts; but then the plant and the seedling differ in every particular.' He put down the sock again. 'I can't get along of my knitting because of Trinity House. Why doesn't Trinity House take the light upon its hands? Then it would not be undermanned; I should not be left here, alone

with a hulking, scatterbrained boy. I must go on deck and have another look after him.'

He climbed the ladder. The aspect of the sky and sea was changed. The sky was overcast with black whirling vapours; the sea, from being fretful, was angry; a shadow as of an impending woe crept over the face of nature.

The wind was off shore, so that the waves were not considerable; but behind the spit of land and the willows the coast bent away to the south, and the wind was able to heap up the waters there and roll them round in a sort of race beyond the spit, a line of leaping, shaking, angry tumblers, dark as ink when not maned with foam, meeting and driving back the muddy, churned wavelets that were swept outwards from the shallow shore and mud-flats.

'Blow that boy! If he gets swamped, his mother will lay all the blame on me for certain.' He stood clutching the bulwarks, looking at the boat. He could not see distinctly; the wind, charged with foam, drove in his eyes, and in the dancing water, the boat was as often hidden as seen.—'By gorra!' he exclaimed suddenly, 'it ain't Joe after all! Why—who in the world can it be? Dashed if it ain't a gal!' He drew his jersey sleeve across his eyes. 'Joe never can ha' gone and changed his sex. He can't have bided ashore and sent his sister. Of all unreliable creatures, there never was the likes of a boy. Here's a pretty go! Sending a gal out with the bread—and me a widower.' Then suddenly his heart stood still, and a feeling of sickness came over him. 'There can't have nothing happened to the little 'uns—and mother have sent!—not to baby!—and me knitting her socks.'

The lightship pitched and rolled; anchored as she was, she was subject to more violent and abrupt motions than if she had been free. Cable went on one knee and held his hand over his eyes, to assist in taking a more steady observation.

'It ain't our boat,' he said. Then he shouted. The boat was now near. A girl was in it, rowing towards the vessel. She wore a glazed, black, sailor's hat; from under it her hair, long and dark, flew about in the wind.

'Come under the lee!' shouted Richard Cable. The girl slightly turned her head; as she did so the wind covered her face with her hair. She seemed all but completely exhausted. She pulled with long and laboured strokes.

'She's a young thing, and looks like a lady,' mused Cable.

'However she comes out here, it is not about the little 'uns. Mother is no fool.'

The girl, perhaps dazed with the hair and salt water in her eyes, and overcome with exhaustion, let go one oar to raise her hand and brush the hair from her face. The boat swung about at once.

'Hold hard!' shouted Cable. 'Don't lose heart. Here's a rope-end.' He caught up and cast a rope to her with such true aim that it fell athwart the boat; and the girl seized it with both hands, and in so doing, let go the other oar, which was at once carried off by the sea.

'She's lost her head,' said Richard. 'It's lucky she didn't do it afore she came within reach.' Then he called to her: 'Make fast round the thwart, and I'll haul you in. Don't lose your head, whatever you do. Hold together, if but for a minute.'

The girl was staggering to her feet in the rolling boat.

'Keep hold of the rope!' he shouted. Then the boat touched the side of the lightship, which rolled at the moment. He caught the girl's hands, extended imploringly. The ship swung over, and he managed to raise the girl to the deck; but as she sprang from the boat, the spurn of her foot, or the recoil from the side of the vessel, sent her little boat adrift. The next moment it was swept away by the waves, whither Cable could not see—he had not the time to look; the condition of the girl he had saved engrossed his attention.

She was tall; in dark-blue navy serge gown, with a leather belt round her waist. She could not speak. Her breast was heaving; her breath came short and fast. Her cheeks were on fire, but her eyes were dim. Her consciousness was deserting her.

'You're pretty nigh done,' said Cable; 'let me fetch you a drop of brandy, miss.'

She put out her hand to arrest him, and held to the bulwark with the other. She could not keep her feet. The motion of the vessel was irregular. It rolled, and was brought up with a jerk.

'I see,' said he; 'you must not be left alone. Drat it!—that's a souser!' as a wave went over the deck, covering him and the girl with a drench of spray. 'Come down with me—or, stay! let me carry you into the cabin.'

She offered no resistance, so he caught her in his arms and took her to the ladder. Her heart, under his hand, was

fluttering like a butterfly at a window. Her breath came in sobs. He bore her to the ladder with long strides and descended with her to the outer cabin; this was where the coals were stowed, and the oil stored; where he cleaned and trimmed the lamps. Beyond was a low doorway, that led into the main cabin, which in shape and relative proportions was like the toe-half of a boot. At the narrow end was the fireplace or stove; round the sides were lockers for the stowing away of sundries of every kind. The tops of the lockers served as seats. There was no table. On each side of the cabin was an aperture about two feet square, closed at pleasure with a sliding panel: this gave access to the bunk or sleeping-berth. By crawling in at the hole one found a mattress, and space, but only just space enough to lie down, with the nose six inches from the nether surface of the deck. The smallest trifle in the cabin had its proper place, and everything was beautifully clean and orderly.

'There, miss,' Cable said. 'I doubt you won't be able to stow yourself properly into one of these here bunks without knocking yourself about; and if I was to put you on the locker, with the lurching you might slide off; so you had better just lie down on the cabin floor, with your feet to the fire. I'll spread a mattress for you. Lie down till you've got your breath again, and recovered from your fright a bit. You'd better presently, when you can manage it, whip off that gown, which is wet, and let me cover you up with blankets and give you a drop of hot brandy and water. Then try to get to sleep. Don't you mind me, miss. I'm the father of a family. I'm the father of seven little girls, and two of them twins. When you're able to look about you, miss, you'll see a pair of socks I've been knitting for the baby. I've one done, and t'other's getting on. Excuse the liberty if I throw my pilot coat over you—your gown was wet by that wave, and you seem so exhausted you might get your death of a chill. I've got to go aloft after the light, which will occupy me some time. Then you can take off your gown. The darned boy has gorged all the bread, and there was none left; and I sent him ashore for more, and he hasn't come back, or he would act as your lady's-maid. Very sorry, miss, I can't do better; but don't think anything of me. I'm the father of seven children, and there's ne'er a boy among them, and two of them are twins, so there's no occasion to be afraid of me.'

He did not like to leave her in her condition of exhaustion, so he made an excuse to remain till he saw her a little recovered. He put the kettle on the stove. 'We'll have the water boiling directly. It don't mix well with the brandy if it isn't boiling.' Then he lit the pendent lamp, for the cabin was dark, and poked the fire, and coaxed the kettle, and groped for the sugar. When he had mixed her a glass, he brought it to her where she lay. The light of the lamp was on her face. 'Why—I declare, miss!' he exclaimed, 'why—surely, you're Miss Josephine Cornellis.'

She slightly nodded.

'Lord! Whatever brought you here?' he asked.

'I was running away.'

'From what?'

'My own thoughts.'

CHAPTER II.

JOSEPHINE.

The storm increased to fury as darkness fell. Richard Cable stood on deck. To the south-west was no light whatever, only purple blackness. To the north, however, was a coppery streak, over which hung a whirling, spreading mass of angry vapour, casting down lines of heavy rain in dense bands. Then rapidly the growing darkness wiped out this band of light, and left only the east clear, and the clouds swept overhead like curling waves, and fell beyond, cutting off all sunlight there also, till on all sides nothing was visible but leaping water and shaken foam-heads; and above, a wild hunt of tearing, galloping clouds, lashed by the wind, with now and then a blinding streak of lightning shot through them, stinging them to fresh paroxysms of flying terror. Richard Cable had ascended to the masthead and kindled the light. The mast was but low, perhaps fifteen feet above the deck, topped with a huge glass globe, that contained a powerful swinging light.

As Cable clung to the mast, he and it and the light swung, and the light described arcs and curves in the sky, against the driving smoky clouds and the gathering night.

Now and again a great wave leaped up, and the swaying lamp irradiated its crest, and glared a glittering eye at it, that was reflected by the angry water, which rushed away under the keel, and threw it aloft, as if diving to get away from the blazing eye. The ship reeled and almost plunged its fire-point in the water; it tantalised the waves with it; it heeled almost to overbalance, and held the light above some hissing, hungry wave, which gathered itself together, rose at it to snap, and suddenly, with a whish and a streak of fiery ribbon, away went the luminous globe, and the wave roared and tore itself to ragged foam in rage at being balked. Then a gull hovered in the radiancy of the lamp, beating its long white wings about it, coming out of the darkness and spray-dust that filled the air, and disappearing back into it again, as man comes out of the Unknown, flickers a little span in the light of Life, and dives back into the Unknown. The wind had shifted several points, but it was hard for Cable to make out from whence it blew; the lightship was anchored, and swung about her anchor, seemingly describing circles, pitching, tossing, heading at the wind, running before it, brought up with a jerk, lurching sullenly at it. She was moored to a couple of anchors, one of them a 'mushroom' (so called from its shape), for greater security against dragging, and Cable had paid out more chain to each. In such a gale, with such rollers, she must be given room to battle with the sea. Cable was by no means satisfied that she could hold where she was. The bank to which she was anchored was a shifting bank, formed by the swirl of the water round the ness; a treacherous bank, that formed and reformed, that was now a strip, then a disc, that eased this way and that, according to the drift of the sea at equinoctial gales. He looked landwards, but saw nothing, no blink of light from behind the willows, where lay Hanford; and outside Hanford, near the beach, a little white cottage with green windows, and under its brown tile roof seven little fair heads on white pillows.

As he stood looking through the darkness in the direction of the sleeping heads, he was startled by a voice at his elbow.

'Captain, is the worst over?'

'Miss! You should not be here.'

'I cannot help myself; I was suffocating below. I fancied we must part our anchor. I have plenty of pluck. My strength, not my courage, failed me in the boat. I lost my

head because I was losing consciousness. I am well again. Is the gale spent?'

There was a lull in the wind, though the waves were still running. 'You must go below—you must, indeed,' said Cable.—'No; the gale is not over; it goes as a teetotum spins, and we're now at the peg. Wait, and it will be on us harder than ever again.'

'Can I be of any assistance?'

'You!' Cable laughed. 'Yes, go down below and be ballast.'

The girl was in his pilot coat, which he had thrown over her on the floor. She wore his glazed hat. The hair that had been dispersed was gathered in a knot again.

'If we are likely to drown,' she said, 'I will not drown in the hold, like a mouse in a cage.'

'Go down at once, whilst you may. You will be swept overboard if you stay here.'

'I will not,' she answered. 'Lash me to the mast, and let me look death and the storm in the face.'

Cable saw that it was in vain to argue with her. There was no time to be lost; he heard the roar of the gale again approaching.

'Here!' she said; 'this is my leather strap. Pass it round the mast and my waist It is long and it is strong. Quick!'

He obeyed with a growl: 'Girls are as darned unruly as boys.'

The storm was on them again. It had paused to gather strength, and then rush in concentrated fury and accumulated force to destroy the defiant little lightship, that tossed its glittering head so dauntlessly, even defiantly, in its teeth.

They could hear it coming far away, in a roar that waxed in volume, and seemed like an enveloping thunder when it smote them with foam and a blast that struck like an open hand. But the wind was not one-handed, but as a Briareus, many-armed, tearing while it bellowed at what it could not beat down. At the stress of the blow, one of the cables gave way, a link having snapped somewhere under water. Then the main anchor, the chain having got foul of it, began to drag, and at once the lightship was adrift, at the mercy of wind and sea, swept before the hurricane. From force of habit Cable flew to the helm, but as quickly dropped it again. He was helpless. The dragging of the anchor kept the

vessel's head to wind, which was so far in their favour, and also steadied her to some extent. Now and then the anchor caught for a moment, and then let go again, and the ship was driven farther out, always heading to the wind, like a living being forced to retreat, but reluctant to yield an inch to the infuriated assailants.

Cable looked at the girl, on whom the flicker of the lamp fell; she did not cry, or, if she did, he did not hear her. She was fast bound by the belt, and stood, apparently as firm as the mast to which she was strapped. Cable folded his arms. He could do nothing. He thought of his little ones. Had they prayed that night, before going to rest, for their father? Never had he more needed their prayers. He thought he knew the danger that threatened; but he did not. He saw indeed that shipwreck was imminent; but he little imagined that another and very different shipwreck menaced him. How old were the seven daughters of Richard Cable? The eldest was just thirteen; then came the twins of eleven; then a child of ten; and the pan-pipe descended in a regular fall to the baby, aged a year. They had come so fast as to exhaust the strength of the mother, who had died shortly after giving life to the youngest.

Richard Cable raised his eyes, half-blind with salt, and, through the film of brine, looked at the swaying lamp, that seemed to blaze with prismatic colours, and shoot forth rays and draw them in again, like a fiery porcupine. And then he thought no more of the light and the darkness in which it danced, and saw far away into dreamland. Then through the cold salt spray on his face, a warm sweat broke forth.

'Poor little ones!' he said; 'if I am taken, whatever will become of them!'

At that moment he heard the girl's voice: 'Mr. Cable! Loosen the band—my arms are frozen.'

Her voice jarred on him at that moment, he knew not why; but it called him back from the consideration of his children to thoughts about her. He went to her and did what she required. He didn't speak to her; and, when he had complied with her wishes, he went back to the place where he had stood before. He tried to think of his home, of his children, and could not; her face, her voice had distracted him, and disturbed the visions he tried to call up.

How much of the night passed thus he did not know; he was roused by a grating sound that made itself felt in every

fibre of his body. The ship was aground; she had struck, not on a rock, but on a sandbank. Cable stood for a moment motionless. Then a wave came, raised the bows, ran midships, then to the stern, and carried the vessel farther on the bank. Thereupon, Cable left his place and came to the mast. 'Miss Cornellis,' he said, 'we're aground. I believe my little ones' prayers have helped me to-night.' He laid his hand on the mast and grasped the thong that bound Josephine. 'Young lady,' he said, 'in ten minutes we shall know our fate.' He stood still, holding the thong. He said no more for full twenty minutes. The vessel lay over somewhat on one side, and the water she had shipped poured out of her lee scuppers.

'I can see the horizon on the south-south-west,' said the girl.

'Yes; the worst of the gale is over.'

The waves no longer washed the deck.

'The tide is ebbing,' said Cable. He unlashed Josephine. 'Danger is over. Turn in and sleep.'

'But you?'

'I stay on deck awhile, and then I shall coil up in the forecastle.'

'Good-night,' she said, and held out her hand.

'I wish you sleep,' he said in reply. 'Mind the knitting-pins and the little sock in the cabin. They may be on the floor—anywhere.'

Next morning Cable woke early. The sun was shining. He descended the ladder to the outer cabin. Almost at the same moment the girl threw open the door and stood in it. She wore her blue serge gown. Her hair was fairly smoothed, though she was unprovided with brushes, and the leather belt was about her waist. She laughed. Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes sparkled. 'Not in Davy Jones' locker, after all,' she said. 'I must run on deck and look around me.'

'And I, Miss Cornellis, will get the fire lighted, the kettle boiling, and some breakfast ready.'

Half an hour later both were together on deck. The vessel was not so much inclined that it was difficult to walk the deck. When she had struck the sand was in motion, and she had sunk almost upright in it. The morning was fresh, the sky clear, but for some lagging, white, fleecy clouds that flew high aloft after the storm. Except for the roll of the sea and the foam-wreaths round the bank, every trace of the

terrible hurricane was gone. That storm had been short and violent; it had spun its spiral course over land and sea, doing damage wherever it passed; it had strewn the Essex level land with up-turned elms: it had torn the leaves of the chestnuts to threads, and blackened the young beech as if a breath from a furnace had seared them. Here and there it had taken a rick and sifted it and scattered the straw over the adjoining fields. It had ripped roofs, and tossed the brown tiles about and heaped them like russet autumn leaves. At sea it had caught and foundered coal-barges from the North, and sunk fishing-smacks. It had torn great gaps in seawalls, like the bites made by children's teeth in rounds of bread and butter. It had twisted and turned about old sand-banks, had swept some away, and torn channels where had been no road. For some miles out to sea, for two or three days, there was neither crystalline purity nor amethyst blue in the water; it was cloudy and brown with the mud it had churned and that it held in suspension. Along the shore lay wreaths of foam, not white, but brown; not evanescent as a bubble, but drying into a crust.

The lightship lay far away from the zone of turbid sea, and the ocean about the bank in which she was wedged was deeply blue, full of laughter and shake of silver curl, as though bent on passing off its late fury-fit as an excusable frolic.

'Where are we?' asked Josephine.

'I fancy that I know,' answered Cable; 'but without a chart I cannot make you understand. Now here we must bide till we are taken off, and you may tell me what brought you to the lightship.'

'I was out rowing yesterday afternoon,' said the girl, 'and I was caught unawares, the storm came on so suddenly. I rowed against the wind till I could row no more, and I saw I could do nothing. I was being carried out to sea; and then I felt that my only chance was to reach your vessel.'

'That was wise of you. But your father should not have let you come out alone.'

'Oh, I go out, and go alone, when I choose.'

'But—if he had looked at the glass, he would have seen the fall.'

'I did not ask his leave. I went because I wanted fresh air, to blow the bad thoughts out of my head that troubled me.'

'Bad thoughts trouble you!' exclaimed Cable, and looked

steadily at her out of his crystalline blue eyes, clear and sparkling as the sea that surrounded them. 'I should not have supposed that possible. Where the head is that of an angel, one does not expect that it shall hold bad thoughts. No one looks for explosives in a porcelain vase.'

Josephine laughed a short impatient laugh, and tossed her chin. The elastic was tight; she put her finger under it; the skin was compressed and reddened by the band.

She was a handsome dark girl, with transparent olive skin, and large lustrous eyes like agates. The lashes were long; when she half-closed her lids they gave a languor to the orbs, dispelled at once when full lifted. Her cheek flushed not the rose pink, but the ripe hue of the apricot. She had very dark hair, a rounded chin, broad temples; was firmly built. To any one experienced in detecting types, a tinge of Jewish blood would have been recognised in the features and hue. 'Well,' she said, and laughed again, 'the hurricane has blown my bad thoughts out of my head, as it has carried the down from the willow flowers, and scattered them—heaven knows where. Woe be to him who picks them up!—they will detonate and injure his hands.'

'Were they so bad?'

'You said yourself—explosives.'

'Miss Cornellis, I made a clumsy comparison. If I may ask—What were these thoughts?'

She fidgeted with her feet and plucked at the elastic band. In her nervous confusion, she drew it out, let it slip, and the elastic snapped on her delicate skin so sharply as to make her cry out. Then she took off her hat, and holding her knees, swung the hat from her finger, and let the wind play with her hair, and unravel it, and scatter it and toss about the short growth over her brow.

'Were the thoughts like to explode?' asked Cable.

'The questions you put to me are not fair, captain,' said the girl. 'My thoughts are my own.'

'Not a bit, Miss Cornellis: you said yourself they were blown about for any one to pick up.'

'Well—and I am too much indebted to you to wish you to gather them. They are dangerous. Hands off!' She hugged her knees, and played with the string of her cap, and looked at the plunging waves on the sand. Her brow darkened, and her eyes lost their sparkle. 'Captain, when shall we get home—I to my worries—you to your babes?'

Cable shook his head. 'We must wait. Ah, miss

patience is an article of which a good cargo is laid in, in a lightship. One consumes a lot of it in a fortnight—separated from all one loves at home, and with none to speak to but a lout of a boy with no more intelligence than a jelly-fish.'

'I should think it pleasant to live in a lightship. I could be well content to stay where I am now. If I go home, I shall get into troubles again.'

'But—what are your troubles?'

'I'm adrift,' said the girl. 'As I stood bound to the mast last night, and the wind and the waves carried the boat and me where they would, I thought it was a picture of myself morally. You have your seven little anchors holding you. I have nothing. You are tied by many little fibres to hearth and home. I have none of these fibres: if I have, they hold to nothing.'

She was still looking before her. She put the elastic band of her hat between her teeth, and bit and tore till it parted.

'There!' said Cable. 'Now, how are you to keep your hat on?'

She looked at the broken string. 'I did not know what I was about,' she said: 'I was thinking my thoughts again.'

'I see,' said Cable. 'These same thoughts are not wholesome; they hurt her who harbours them and those they concern.'

'Yes,' she said; 'they drive me mad. I do not know what to do, where to go. I care for no tie any more than that of my hat I have torn. I would tear any one of them that restrained me.'

'I do not understand you,' said the lightshipman, shaking his head. 'I've seven little girls at home, and I'd be sorry to think any one of them should grow up with such thoughts as you have in your head.'

'They will not. Do not be afraid. They will always look up to and respect you. Did you not see how the lantern swung at the masthead all through the storm? It never went out; it burned all night; no wave ingulfed it. We could always look up to that. You are the light to the little vessel of your family, and your children will look up to that.'

'And you, my dear young lady?'

'I—I have no light above me.'

'And what about helm and helmsman, compass, chart, Miss Cornellis?'

'I have nothing, neither helm nor helmsman, nor compass, chart, nor anchor, nor light. I am—drifting—a derelict.'

CHAPTER III.

A SEA-NETTLE.

CABLE went about his work as usual. He would not have to relight the lamp, as the boat was not at the station, but a castaway; however, he cleaned the lamp as usual and put the burners in order. Then he went into the cabin to clear away the breakfast and make all tidy, after the night. It had not occurred to Josephine to do anything. She was not accustomed to put her hand to menial work; she expected to be waited upon.

She half sat, half lay on the side of the vessel that leaned over, nearest the water, listening to the pleasant lap of the waves, with the glitter on her face from the sun reflected in the glassy water. She amused herself with watching the foam bubbles dance along, with wondering what the dark things were beneath the green surface that drifted by. Then she looked up and let the hot sun burn her face; she shut her eyes, and basked, or opened them to see the gulls and kittiwakes hover and dart above. Then she put both her hands about her eyes, and tried to distinguish whether that faint white patch far away in the blue were the moon or a ghostly cloud. The tide had risen, and occasionally the waves came up so high that her hand over the side dipped in the water, and she sought to catch the weeds that were floating on it. With her fingers hanging over the bulwarks, with salt drops falling from them, she sang the Mermaid's air in *Oberon*:

> O wie wogt es sich schön auf der Fluth
> Wenn die müde Welle im Schlummer ruht!

She was happy, doing nothing, inhaling the fresh sea air, basking in the bright sun.

Josephine Cornellis was the daughter of a gentleman of some independent means, who lived in a villa or cottage near the sea at Hanford. The house was not beautiful, built of white brick, and square, but it was comfortable. It had a glass conservatory to the south before the drawing-room windows; and a pretty garden, inclosed within tarred wooden boards, that went down to the sea-wall. Mr. Cornellis lived in Rose Cottage with his unmarried sister and his daughter.

He was a man of whose antecedents little was known. He had bought Rose Cottage some seven or eight years ago, and had come there with his sick wife, because the doctors ordered her sea air and the chlorine effluvium from the rotting seaweed. She had died there, a feeble, dispirited woman, whom few had got to know; and the husband remained on, as widower, with the little daughter, whom he allowed to go much her own way.

Mr. Cornellis was suspected of having Jewish blood in him; but no one knew anything about his ancestry. His true history was this. His great-grandfather, the first of the name, was an Austrian Jew, who came by his appellation in this way. The Emperor Joseph II. issued an order that all Jews in his dominions were to provide themselves with fixed surnames. Accordingly, the Hebrew Levis and Samuels and Isaacs chose for themselves the most flowery appellations they could invent, and became a Mountain of Roses (Rosenberg) or a Valley of Lilies (Lilienthal), or affected heraldic distinctions, as Redshield (Rothschild) or Golden Star (Goldenstern), or simply Stag (Hirsch) or Lion (Löwe). But old Moses Israel had not a lively imagination nor much ambition, and when summoned before the magistrate to have his name registered, he was at a loss what to call himself. 'Come, old skinflint,' said the official, taking the pen from his ear—'come —the name.'

'The name!' stammered Moses Israel.

'The surname. It must be entered on the protocol. I have no time to waste on you.'

'Surname!' repeated the Jew, and put up his hand to his head.

'I see,' said the magistrate, 'you have a cornelian ring on your forefinger. Cornelian shall be your name, *or*——'

'*Or!*' Moses Israel accepted the appellation given him from his ring rather than risk the alternative. Austrian officials did not make many bones of a Jew in those days. So the son of Moses Israel called himself after his father, Levi Carneols, but came to England, where he softened the Carneols into Cornellis. He married an Englishwoman, and professed Christianity. The great-grandson of old Moses Israel was Justin Cornellis. As his father was not well off, and he was obliged to do something for a livelihood, and as he had no love of hard work, he attached himself to a missionary society, and was sent about Asia and Northern Africa in quest of the

Lost Tribes. He drew three hundred a year from this society, and rambled about, sending home occasional reports, pure fabrications, based on absolutely no facts, spiced with appeals to fanaticism and piety. This lasted till somewhere in the Levant he caught the affections of a young English lady, the daughter of a merchant, and eloped with her, got married, and then threw up his position as missionary to the Lost Tribes.

The relations of his wife were very angry at the marriage, and Cornellis did not get with her as much money as he had calculated on securing. Nevertheless, he got something—her mother's portion; and with her and her income, he settled in England, where he did his best to dissipate her fortune on his own selfish pleasures. He neglected his wife, and spent much of his time in town. She became a mother, and then her health gave way. She had not the spirit to bear up against her disappointments. She had idealised the earnest, handsome missionary; and when she found him a sceptical, selfish man, her disappointment crushed her spirit. She lived on several years, till her daughter Josephine was about twelve, and then died.

Mr. Cornellis was a man who knew human nature, or prided himself on knowing it; but he knew only its weaknesses. He held mankind in contempt, as something to be preyed on by the man who had intelligence.

Associated with such a father, void of principle, it may be understood how Josephine could speak of herself as a derelict without anchor, light, or chart. She was a girl with natural warmth of character and generous feelings; but they were blighted by the cold sarcastic breath of her father's spirit, a spirit that sneered at kindliness, yet affected it in public; that made a mock of enthusiasm, yet pretended to it when likely to be profitable.

For some time Mr. Cornellis had cut himself completely adrift from all his old associates; but as his means became reduced, he began again to court them, and resumed his cloak of piety and benevolence, as occasion served, much as an actor would put on his costume for the part he was prepared to represent.

There are hypocrites of all sorts in the world; the most common kind is that which deceives itself. Those who belong to this breed are unconscious hypocrites, and no one would be more surprised than themselves to be stripped of their

masquerade. But Mr. Cornellis knew perfectly what he was about. He wanted something of a certain class of men, and he dressed his window to catch them. At home he made no pretence to believe in the goodness of the articles exposed; he scoffed at the fools who were caught by them.

Josephine respected her father for his ability, but could not love him. He showed her little affection; he ridiculed all exhibition of feeling.

Her aunt was not an interesting woman. She was a butt for her brother's jokes. A woman with a mind essentially commonplace, without taste, refinement, and ability. She was stout and plain. There was in her, however, a certain amount of honesty and kindliness. Josephine despised Aunt Judith because she was stupid. There was no one about her whom she could love.

Richard Cable came up, took a bucket, turned it over, and seated himself on it, with his knitting, near Josephine.

'I have been watching a violet-coloured jelly-fish,' she said languidly. 'It opens and shuts like a parasol, and so works its way along; but how it can think to do this perplexes me, as it has no brains.'

'There are certain to be jelly-fish where the water is shallow and warm.'

'What an ideally perfect life they lead, floating when the sun shines, sinking when storm threatens.'

'But, Miss Cornellis, it is not a good life at all for such as us—we must always keep up, never sink.'

'And, to drift with the tide,' she said.

'This makes the difference between us and jelly-fish,' said the sailor. 'They go with the current, and we swim against the tide. God has withdrawn brain from the creature because it does not deserve one, floating as it does with the tide. Brain is needed only for those whose life is made up of effort.'

'Yes,' she answered, and laughed: 'I suppose it is so. And yet, there is a luxury in having the consciousness of brain power in one, and yet—swimming with the tide.'

'That is not a luxury—it is a treason,' said Cable. 'Would you be a jelly-fish, Miss Cornellis? Then choose only lukewarm and shallow water as your element.' There was a tone of reproach in his voice.

She was displeased at it, and pouted.

'Would you like a net, miss, and try to catch prawns?' he asked after a pause.

'No. I want to be a jelly-fish for the nonce—do nothing, think of nothing, but enjoy the sun and the glitter of the water.'

Again a silence of some duration.

'Did you chance to see my mother and any of my little ones about, before you left Hanford?' asked Cable. 'Excuse my asking; but I have not seen them for ten days.'

'No,' answered Josephine. 'I don't know them by sight.'

'There are seven,' said Cable.

'So I have heard.—You have lost your wife?'

'Yes. Poor Polly died ten months ago.'

'Tell me something about the children,' said Josephine. She lacked sympathy to hear concerning them. She spoke carelessly. She was vexed in her idle mood at being disturbed. She was in no way interested in the children; if they had been drowned, she would not have cared.

'It's a funny thing for a man to do, to knit,' she said sleepily.

'I knit for my babe; and I knit the love of my heart in and out with the wool, to keep the dear little feet warm.'

'I suppose you are fond of it.—I hate babies.'

Cable said nothing. He looked at Josephine's handsome face and wondered. He knitted a round, thinking, and then he said: 'Some day you may have babes of your own, and then you would like them to have a thousand feet, and to clothe all the little feet in socks knitted out of your heart-strings. You would give them everything you had; you would love them so dearly.'

'I cannot understand you. Are you talking Chinese?'

'No—the language of nature.'

'Yes; I suppose it is so. Cats and dogs, and I have no doubt also jelly-fish, love their young. As the brain gains, there is less of this animal affection. My father is a very clever man. He does not care much for me. You see, I am of no use to him.'

'He not care for you!'

'Oh, he *cares* for me, because he has the trusteeship of my mother's little fortune. You must see, Mr. Cable, disinterested affection is, and must be, irrational. That, I should think, was obvious to the meanest capacity.'

Cable continued his knitting. Her words troubled him, and his hand was unsteady; he dropped a stitch.

Josephine had her eyes half-closed, watching him, and a smile twinkled on her lips. She was amused at him, he was so simple. He loved his children, he had little brain. Then she laughed out.

Cable raised his bright blue eyes and met hers. He did not speak; but he questioned the occasion of her laugh with them. He had a suspicion that she laughed at him.

'I only want one thing to make me quite happy,' she said. 'I was thinking of some chocolate creams I left on my dressing-table. Do you know that when I have been missed, Aunt Judith will eat my chocolate creams, and so console herself for my being drowned?—What is there for dinner to-day?'

'Salt pork. I have nothing else.'

'It is well Aunt Judith is not here. She would be more troubled at having salt pork, than at being cast away on a sandbank.'

'You do not speak respectfully of your aunt.'

'I do not respect her.'

'I wish, miss,' said Cable, 'you would promise me, when you are on shore, that you would look at my little ones.'

'Oh, yes; I will carry them bonbons; but I gave you fair warning that I shall not fall in love with them.'

Richard Cable's brow was troubled, and his hands would not make the stitches right. He laid the little sock aside, and folded his rough brown hands round his knee. He was a man who thought a good deal. Isolated from all companions for every alternate fortnight, except only from the tiresome, stupid boy, who was no associate, he lived much in his own thoughts. In the lightship he had time on his hands, time in which to think; and perhaps the nature of his occupation, perhaps natural proclivity, had made of him a man who lived an inner life, a quiet, serene-souled man, who had never known a greater trouble than the death of Polly, his young wife, whom he had married when she was eighteen, and he hardly one-and-twenty. At sea-side places, where there is much fishing, the men marry early. He had loved his Polly warmly, placidly, not passionately. There had been no cross-currents in his courting; all had gone smoothly to marriage; and since marriage, the course had also been smooth till the great breakdown ten months ago. He was a God-fearing man, with a simple, childlike trust and faith; and he was a kindly

man to all around him. Though he swore at and grumbled about the boy Joe who was associated with him, he was considerate of him, and gentle with him, sparing him hard work, and careful to speak no unseemly word before him. Joe looked up to him as a dog to its master, with a hearty devotion; and his parents were inclined to joke him about his references to Master Cable's opinions, as though they were infallible.

When Richard's fortnight was out, and he came back to Hanford, no man could be happier than he, as he sat with the baby on his knee, and put his rough finger into its mouth and let it try its new tooth on it; with the six other little girls round him, all fair-haired, with clear complexions and blue eyes. But though he dearly loved them all, and made most fuss with the baby, the eldest, Mary, sat nearest his heart. She was called after his dead wife; and there was a look about her eyes and something in all the upper part of her face that made him think of Polly. He took her to walk with him, but did not speak much. He was a silent man, thinking his own thoughts. These thoughts were of a simple order, and the revolution in his brain was by no means eccentric; but now he was brought in contact with a young girl who belonged not only to a different social sphere, but to a distinct moral and mental order; and against his will, she exerted a powerful disturbing influence on his mind. He did not understand her; he was uncertain whether she spoke out the real feeling of her heart; or whether she dissembled with him, and affected a callousness which she did not actually feel. He looked long and steadily at her, trying to read her character. She felt his eyes on her, and every now and then half-opened her lids and looked at him in reply to his gaze; then he started and turned his head away with a sensation as if he had received a shot.

'How long is it since your father died?' asked Josephine, sitting up and putting on her hat.

He paused a while to gather his thoughts before he replied, then he said quietly, gravely, without a muscle changing in his face: 'I have lost him since I was an infant. I do not remember him.'

'What did he die of? Was he drowned at sea?'

'I do not know that he is dead.'

'Not dead!' She opened her beautiful brown eyes in surprise. 'Where is he, then?'

'I do not know.'

'How droll! Why does he not live with your mother and you?'

He paused again—a dark colour mantled his brow and temples. 'He deserted my mother.'

'And you have never been after him?'

'No.' He moved uneasily.

'Nor would I—unless he had money.'

Cable stood up and paced the deck with his head down. He raised it now and then and looked over the sea to the horizon. He was wishing that a sail was visible. He became uneasy at being cast away on a sandbank with this girl. Her presence disturbed the equanimity of his mind. He was attracted by her, yet she repelled him. He pitied her yet he feared her.

Presently he came up to her, and she raised her brown eyes to him to ask what he wanted. He bent his away. 'Look into the water,' he said a little roughly.

'The water is falling; I can see through to the sand.'

'Do you see yonder yellow mass floating by?'

'Yes—like a ghostly sponge.'

'Do you know what it is?'

'A sort of jelly-fish.'

'It is a sea-nettle.'

'A plant?'

'No; a living being. If you were to touch it, it would sting you, perhaps paralyse you. I have known bathers in deep water who have encountered one of these harmless-looking creatures, and the touch has deadened their nerves, so that they have sunk as lead and never came up again alive.'

'It is a pretty thing, too, with its long filaments. You hinted that there were human beings like jelly-fish.'

'There are. What I say, I think. And there are human beings, even beautiful young girls, like sea-nettles. The jelly-fish have no heads; they do not hurt. The sea-nettles have no hearts; they sting and kill.'

'And I!' laughed Josephine, 'I am one of the latter! You are not complimentary. I have not hurt you—at least I have had no intention of doing so.'

'The sea-nettle has no thought of hurting the bather; its touch palsies without its having spiteful purpose, simply because it don't consider the feelings of those it encounters.'

Her face became grave, and she turned it abruptly away towards the sea.

He continued his walk. Then he went into the cabin and fetched his telescope. He looked intently in one direction; Josephine looked over the bulwarks in another; he at the far off, she at the near—the ebbing tide and the drifting weed and living creatures in the shallows. Then he came across to her. 'I am sorry I spoke rudely,' he said.

She turned her face. There were tears in her eyes, perhaps of mortified vanity. She put out her hand to him. 'Do not be afraid to touch me,' she said with a forced laugh; 'I will not hurt you. I would not do so for a great deal. I daresay I am hard. I am unhappy. I trust no one; believe in nothing; have no love, no hope. I will not sting. Tell me the truth always, however unpalatable. I hate lies.'

Then he stooped and touched the tips of her fingers with his lips. 'I pity you infinitely,' he said. 'You must find some one or something to love, or you will be lost.'

His voice was so kind, his manner so deferential, such genuine, hearty compassion streamed out of his honest eyes, that she was softened. 'I will come and see you sometimes,' she said; 'I will see your mother and the children. I will try to get interested in them, and get out of myself, and away from the hateful atmosphere that surrounds me at home.' Then she laughed. 'Mr. Cable, throw me a rope now and then, and haul me out of the shallow water in which I live, and where I shall become a sea-nettle.'

'With God's help, I will do what I can,' he said gravely, and put his hand to his cap, as offering a salute.

CHAPTER IV.

ROSE COTTAGE.

Mr. Cornellis was standing at the window of his drawing-room, looking out into the conservatory, with his hands in his pockets. He was a dark, handsome man, with brown eyes, like those of his daughter, but harder: polished pebbles without any softness in them. He wore a moustache, no beard or whisker; he affected nothing clerical in his dress, but he wore black, chiefly because he thought it suited him. He was par-

ticular about his clothes, always was neat, and with fresh white, starched cuffs and collar and shirt-front; and his cloth suit fitted him admirably. One might have supposed that, with his rambling life in the East, he would have contracted untidy, careless habits; but this was not the case; he affected to be a well-dressed man. He knew how important it is for a man in Europe to maintain a good exterior, if he is to command the respect of men. No one will believe that the moral character is out at elbows, when the cloth coat is without creases; and everyone mistrusts the uprightness of the man whose trousers bulge at the knees. Why not? Is not a dog with a patchy back out of sorts? and a moulting fowl an unprofitable creature? How are we to judge except by the exterior? There are telescopes constructed by which we can peer under water, and see what lies far down in the deeps; but we have no such apparatus for thrusting down men's throats and prying into the abysses of their hearts. Besides, if we had them, our fellows would decline to allow us to use them. There are stethoscopes by which the doctor can hear the inhalations of our lungs, the inflation of its vessels, and can detect which are sound and which carious; but there are no spiritual stethoscopes which we can apply to our neighbours' temples, and hear through them the operation of the brain, and distinguish base from healthy thoughts there. I maintain that we are justified in judging of a man by his coat and continuations, by his hat, and gloves and his boots; for there is congruity in all creatures, and the exterior does almost invariably correspond with the interior. The face is the index of the mind, and the gloves of the soul. Who does not know that the pair of lavenders with the fingers showing at the ends indicates radical shabbiness through all the integuments of the character? and the dirty left-hand and clean right-hand dogskin an ill-balanced spirit?

Mr. Cornellis was piping low to himself between his very white front teeth, which were just so far apart as to allow the breath to hiss or whistle between them. It was unusual with him to have his hands in his pockets; that was a luxury in which he indulged himself only at home. Abroad, he played with his gold watchchain, curling it round his forefinger. He was now looking at a Maréchal Niel rose that hung its drops of yellow flowers from the roof; the sun streamed in through its pale green leaves upon the beautiful blossoms. Then Mr. Cornellis opened the French window and went into the con-

servatory, and still hissing, plucked off the withered blooms, which he put in a basket kept for the purpose. He was tidy in that also. Then he pulled up a weed he saw in an azalea pot; then opened his penknife with a threepenny bit, lest he should break his nail, and carefully cut a charming bud off the creeping rose. He came back into the parlour, laid the flower on the table, and said: 'Put it in water, Judith.'

'For myself?' asked Miss Cornellis, who was lounging with her back to the window in an arm-chair.

'For Gabriel,' answered Mr. Cornellis.

'You never give me anything, Justin.'

'Because you take what you want, Judith.'

'I really cannot think how you can have the heart to be squashing aphis and picking roses——'

'I am not, and I have not been, what you call squashing aphis. If I want to kill the aphis, I use an insecticide or brushes.'

'I don't care how you do it,' said Miss Cornellis. 'It is heartless of you, whether done with your fingers, or with brushes or Ghishurst's Compound.—Poor Josephine! Who knows where she may be? Perhaps floating dead on the surface, perhaps sunk in the deeps.'

'Am not I her father?' said Mr. Cornellis sharply. 'Have I not the feelings proper to my position? Of course I am troubled and anxious; but I do not forestall evils. If the worst come to pass, her life is insured for a thousand pounds. You would not have me sit moistening handkerchiefs, at the prospect of an evil which may not have occurred.'

'Where is Josephine? She went out in the boat, and neither she nor the boat has turned up since. I don't say that I expect you to blubber——'

'Merciful heavens! Judith, how coarse you are. I said moisten, and that word is expressive enough. It is a mark of bad breeding to use exaggerated terms.'

'Justin, I don't care twopence about the word; it is the thing concerns me. You don't seem to half feel Josephine's disappearance, and then—to talk in that cold-blooded way of having insured her life!'

'I did insure her, two years ago; and if she be lost, I shall claim the money.'

'I never doubted that,' said Judith. 'You will always view everything from a monetary point of sight, even your daughter's death.'

'My dear sister, one must live. I do not wear my heart exposed to all the world, trailed to the light, spread out, tied to wires, and call everyone to admire its tears, like the blossoms of a Maréchal Niel. What are you about now with your back to the light?'

'I—— Nothing, Justin.'

'I am positive you are doing something that affects your speech.'

His sister hesitated a moment, and then said: 'I have been searching poor dear Josephine's room, in hopes of finding some clue to her whereabouts.'

'And pray, do you suppose she has gone a cruise in her own bedroom, and has run aground on the firemat, or shipped a sea in the wash-hand basin?'

'I thought I might find some trace of where she had gone.'

'That is like your wisdom, Judith. Perhaps you suppose she had gone out meditating suicide, and had left a note to inform us of her intentions. You are hardly gifted with sufficient imagination to conceive of such nonsense as that. Well—what did you find?'

'Only a box of chocolate creams.'

'And you are munching them! Really, Judith, you are heartless, not I.'

'There is no harm in eating chocolate creams.'

'None in the least, only—it is greedy to munch when you should suck.—Hand the box to me.'

Mr. Cornellis put a bonbon into his mouth. Were these two, the father and the aunt, unfeeling in consuming the contents of Josephine's box of chocolate, uncertain of the fate of the girl? We have no right to draw such a conclusion. Miss Cornellis looked at her brother, and thought him heartless because he sucked; and Mr. Cornellis considered his sister callous because she chewed; and we regard them both as lacking in proper feeling because they ate. Are we not as prejudiced, as unjust to both, as the one was to the other? When we attend the funeral of a dear relative, do we not partake of the breakfast? Do we not expect a well-spread table as the necessary concomitant to hearse and hat-band? Are we entirely indifferent to the quality of the sherry? and whether we have the liver, wing, or the drumstick of the chicken handed to us? and does not gall make itself felt in the chambers of the heart, if we are balked of one slice of

tongue with the chicken? The widow upstairs has her eyes red with tears, but is quite sensible whether there is sugar enough with the mint sauce with the lamb; and afterwards, in the hush of the evening, when the masons have closed up the tomb about her darling, and the mourners are gone, she will speak to the cook in a broken voice full of suppressed tears, and bid her mind another time and stir the sugar in the saucedish before sending it in, and chop the mint a little finer. So also the widower, who, with manly self-constraint, has bottled up his tears and talked of the weather, thrusts the crust of his cold veal pie impatiently to the margin of his plate, because the paste is not flaky, and curses his destiny because now he has no one to keep his cook up to the mark.

Then, why should we take offence at Mr. and Miss Cornellis consuming chocolate creams when they are not in the least certain that Josephine is dead? We are all humbugs and hypocrites, more or less; we draw a purely conventional line, and denounce every transgression of that line as evidence of inhumanity or want of taste; but within that arbitrary boundary, we are Pharisees, thanking God we are not as other men are, who eat chocolate creams in times of family bereavement, but content ourselves with gooseberry pie and custard, and blanc-mange and cabinet-pudding.

'The lightship is lost,' said Mr. Cornellis, 'and that fellow Cable has gone to the bottom.'

'He leaves a large family.'

Mr. Cornellis shrugged his shoulders. 'They will wriggle on. I knew a collier once who drowned himself because he thought his family would be well cared for if he were away, judging by the prosperity of the widows and orphans of some of his mates.'

'No tidings whatever of Josephine's boat?'

'Not like to have them, with the gale off shore. If washed up anywhere, it will be on the Dutch coast.'

'Do you really flatter yourself she is alive?'

'I will not believe otherwise till I am forced to it.'

'Gabriel is much fidgeted about her disappearance. He makes more ado than you. He has taken greater fancy to her than I thought possible, considering how she treats him.'

Judith had hardly said the words, before the door opened, and a man came in, a gentleman distinctly, but a feeble, mean creature, with a thin face, almost transparent nose, a low brow, and with faded, watery blue eyes. His face was

pale, and the muscles twitched in it. The head shook on the neck with a nervous, convulsive tremor. The expression of his countenance was a curious mixture of conceit and appeal. He wore a bottle-green coat with velvet collar. As he entered, a smell of opium pervaded the room, and neutralised the fragrance of the tea-rose.

'O Mr. Gotham!' said Aunt Judith, 'we were just speaking of you.'

'Eh, eh! My left ear was burning. What was it? No good, no good, of course.'

'Certainly not, squire,' said Mr. Cornellis, going up to him and clasping his hand with frank and almost boisterous geniality. 'My sister has been shaking her head over you, wondering whether you have sowed all your wild-oats yet; telling me what a scapegrace you are, what a roystering, dashing blade you are, and was asking me to deny you access to our house—and see! in you walk without ringing at the front door, or tapping here at the parlour entrance, just as if you were hail-fellow-well-met, and had the run of our house, and a right to the first place at our table. And, by George! squire, you are right; you are lord of the manor, and I have to do homage to you annually with a straw.'

Mr. Gotham's weak eyes twinkled, and a pink blush suffused his nose. He looked from one to another and giggled.

'Come here, squire,' said Mr. Cornellis, handing him an arm-chair. 'What sort of sport have you had with the harriers?'

'Not much. The last meet, killed two.'

'Any nasty jumps?'

'Two or three.'

'Glad to see you alive, squire.'

'I don't myself care for a hare-hunt,' said Mr. Gotham, letting himself stiffly and slowly down into the chair. 'We run in a circle, you know. Nothing like a fox-hunt; but no more of that till next season.'

'Who were out?'

'I—I—I can hardly say. I wasn't there. I had my neuralgic pains again, and so, at the last moment, reconsidered my purpose. But I intended to go, I intended fully. I began to dress for it, and got on my boots; but the neuralgia took me when I stooped, and I was obliged to have recourse to my drops. So——Judith, I frighten you, do I? No occasion for that. I am sadly changed, sadly—a poor broken being

now.' He looked eagerly, questioningly from sister to brother, and back again.

'Broken fiddlesticks!' exclaimed Mr. Cornellis. 'Do you suppose, if Judith thought that, she would have been pulling a Maréchal Niel for your button-hole? Ladies don't lavish flowers on broken beings and weaklings, but on boisterous fox-hunters and jolly dogs. I know women's hearts; but Lord! so do you, you rascal!'

Mr. Gotham chuckled and blushed. 'There,' he said; 'I have come to hear about poor Josephine. I am so troubled. I could not sleep last night thinking about her. The anxiety brought on my neuralgia—all thinking and worry does, and I should not have slept last night at all but for my drops.'

'It is really very kind of you, squire, to give her so much thought. We have been in sad distress, as you may judge. I am a father—her father; you must excuse me, Gabriel. I try to talk of other matters, but I can only think of my child; she is my own flesh and blood.'

Mr. Gotham began to fidget in his chair; he put up his hand to his brow, and said in a tremulous voice: 'Any news of the lightship? It is lost, I hear, and—I have not been particular in inquiries about it; I was afraid of seeming too particular.'

'None,' answered Mr. Cornellis with his hard eyes on the man.

He, feeble creature, looked at Miss Judith, then at her brother, as if he wanted to say more, but was afraid to commit himself.

'You need not hesitate,' said Mr. Cornellis. 'My sister knows all, and is close as the grave.'

'I am very uneasy, very unhappy. I—I do not know what I ought to do. I could not possibly—and yet—— You can hardly conceive how I have suffered, how the neuralgia has tortured me in consequence of—of—— You can understand me.'

'Let bygones be bygones,' said Mr. Cornellis. 'I knew an old bastion where the dead had been buried after a siege two hundred years ago. Lately, a speculative builder ran up houses over the site, disturbed the earth for his foundations and kitchens, and the first inmates of his new houses died of diphtheria. Never rake up old grave-ground, squire.'

'No. I suppose you are right.' Mr. Gotham stood up.

'But I should like to talk the matter over with you in my house, when the worst is known. I'm not happy. I feel the pains coming on again. I think I must go home.'

'Very well. I will come over. Take something at once to soothe your lacerated nerves?'

Mr. Gotham nodded.

'Do not forget your rose,' said Cornellis. 'My sister picked it expressly for you, but is too shy to offer it you with her own fair hands.'

'The rose will lose half its charm unless it be presented by her,' said Gotham with a bow; and when he had left the room, he sniggered. 'He, he! I can turn a pretty speech to a lady! I'm an old buck! Am I not, Justin?'

'Not old. Why, what are your years—forty-five?'

'Oh, more than that, alas!'

'You don't look it. But it is the hunting, the fresh air. The back of a horse makes you, as Polixenes says, to be boy eternal.'

'Yes. I subscribe very liberally to both the Foxhounds and the Harriers.'

'And you are out with them continually.'

'When I can. I have my horses and my hunting suit; but the neuralgia interferes terribly with my sports. You will come in—you will be sure to come in, after I have had some rest—say, in three hours. I am so uneasy. There is really nothing heard of the lightship?' He looked appealingly to Cornellis.

'Nothing. And believe me, Gabriel, it will be best for all if the blue sea covers him.'

Gotham's hand trembled in that of Cornellis. 'I—I do not know. I am in pain. I cannot bear my sufferings. I must go home. You will come to me?'

'You are overdone, squire, with the hunt.'

'I only intended to go.'

'But—the exertion, even of that! And the drawing on of the boots, to a man so agonised with pain as yourself. Good heavens! the heroism, the self-mastery! What men there are in the world!'

He stood in his door, looking after the squire, who had not far to walk; his gate was within a stone's-throw of Rose Cottage. Not a muscle in his face changed, to show in what way his thoughts turned. Then he went back to the sitting-room.

'Justin,' said his sister, 'I really think you might say a word to him. He is killing himself with opium.'

'My dear Judith, when you see a man on his way to the devil, let him alone. If you try to divert him, he will go another way; but the destination will be the same, and the blame of his going will attach to you.—Give me another of those chocolate creams.'

'You know best,' said Judith. 'You are very clever, and I am dull; but you might do something, I think.'

The door suddenly opened, and Josephine appeared in it, browned from exposure, her eyes dancing. 'I knew it, I knew it! I said as much to Richard Cable. Eating my chocolate creams!'

'Josephine!' Her father stepped forward; her aunt sprang up.

'Well, I knew aunt would be at them. I did not think it of you, papa. Pah! how the room smells of opium. I know that Cousin Gotham has been here.'

'I am very, very glad to see you again, Josephine,' said her father. 'Give me a kiss. Where have you been? What has happened?'

'I—I have been on the lightship with Dicky Cable.'

'He is not dead—not drowned?'

'No more than myself.'

Mr. Cornellis was silent; his brow contracted.

'Upon my word!' exclaimed Josephine, 'what ravages you two have made on my box of chocolate creams!'

CHAPTER V.

HANFORD HALL.

Mr. Gabriel Gotham lived in what was called Hanford Hall, but in Essex every farmhouse is a Hall. It was, however, the manor-house, and was the best house in the place—a long rambling building, plastered, and the windows painted Indian-red; a house long and shallow. It was embowered in trees. The grounds were not extensive, but they were pretty. A steep slope to the sea, with noble elms on it; a set of terraces, where roses grew luxuriantly, and where, in summer, the beds of calceolaria and geranium made a gay contrast to the dense

green of the trees and the sweeps of grass. Here and there on the terraces stood statues of plaster painted, somewhat spotted with black and green decay. The terraces were gravelled from the beach with grit that would not bind, and was carried about by the boots of him who walked on it over the grass and into the rooms. The entrance gates were somewhat pretentious; the posts supported heraldic lions holding shields; but these also were of plaster, not stone, and were painted.

When the tide was in, the view from the terraces and from the windows of the house was very beautiful, through peeps among the elms to sea, and across Hanford water to a coast beyond, also studded with trees. The water was generally enlivened by passing sails, as Hanford was a colony of fishermen, either owning their own boats or going shares as a company in one smack. Barges came to Hanford with coal from Yorkshire and Newcastle; and barges left Hanford piled up on deck with straw, veritable floating stacks, for London. At certain seasons, the sprat-fishery supplied the farmers with unctuous dressing for their fields; at such times, clouds of gulls fluttered over the land thus manured, and unless the fish were quickly ploughed in, rapidly reduced the supply spread over the surface. At such times, the inhabitants of Hanford, gifted with the sense of smell, were heartily glad when the plough did turn the glebe over the dead fish; but there was a worse smell than that of sprats to which the Hanfordians were periodically subjected, and that was when a shipload arrived of what was locally termed 'London muck,' that is, the scrapings of the London streets and the refuse of the London ashpits. When such a cargo arrived, it announced its presence to leeward for two or three miles; whereupon the farmers lifted up their noses, ordered out their wagons, and distributed the stench broadcast over the country. The gulls were unattracted by this dressing; consequently, the farmers were less precipitate in working it in.

At all times, daily, throughout the year, the noses of the Hanfordians were required to inhale the effluvium of decomposing weed when the tide went out, and so nature providently blunted the organ against offence through the periodical dressings of sprats and London muck. The smells, if not pleasant, were salubrious, according to the opinion of the inhabitants; and, to judge from their robust forms and florid complexions, these odours cannot have been noxious.

The marshes, backwaters, and ditches bred countless mosquitoes, which lay in wait for strangers, whom they tortured to madness; but they did not touch natives. On a warm summer evening, the gnats might be seen hovering in clouds over the elms and oaks, so dense and so black, that the stranger supposed the trees were on fire and smoking. The mosquitoes brought birds, and the trees resounded with the song of nightingale, thrush, and blackbird. In winter, the water was covered with gray geese and wild duck, and the shooting of these occupied the men, when nothing was to be got by the fishing.

What was it that made Mr. Gotham start and tremble and shrink back, as he passed through the side gate for foot-passengers into the grounds? Before him stood a woman, old, with gray hair, holding a baby in her arms, whilst two little children clung to her skirts. She was a fine woman, commanding, with bright eyes, and a strongly marked nose. She held herself very erect, and there were dignity and sternness in her manner and attitude as she confronted Gabriel Gotham. He, quivering and speechless, shrank from her, as trying to hide himself from her eye. He had occasion thus to cower before her; for if ever a despicable man had done a dastardly act, that man was Gotham, and the proud woman before him was the one he had wronged. Gabriel Gotham's father had been a solicitor at Newcastle; but his uncle, Jeremy Gotham, a successful merchant, had purchased the manor of Hanford and the Hall. Jeremy had lived there in his old age, and as he had no children of his own, invited his nephew, Gabriel, to stay with him; also his brother and his sister-in-law occasionally. As a boy, Gabriel liked to be with his uncle; the old man made much of him, and was liberal in supplying him with pocket-money. He had a pony and a boat at Hanford, and was called by the hangers-on 'the young squire.' But Gabriel was a weak, lanky boy, badly put together, without colour in his cheeks, and with pale blue eyes and fair limp hair—not at all the ideal young squire that his uncle would have desired as his successor. He supposed that the boy had been overworked at school or overtasked in his father's office, and insisted that the sea-air of Hanford would set him up. He urged him to out-of-door pursuits, to ride with the hounds and to row. But Gabriel preferred to jog to the meet and then ride home; and if he went out in the boat to sit in the stern with his hands in his pockets and let some one else row him.

Jeremy was very proud of his position as lord of the manor, and made himself disliked by exacting all kinds of rights which he believed to be his legally, but which had been ignored or encroached on by the fishermen of Hanford. By the shore was a piece of sandy ground overgrown with coarse turf, occasionally covered by tides of extraordinary height. On this the Hanfordian youth were accustomed to play cricket. Jeremy Gotham laid claim to it; as lord of the manor, it was his. If the young men ran over it, they would establish a precedent, and he would be unable to inclose and extend his grounds in that direction. Consequently, he railed it off. Thereupon the young men tore down his rails. He repalisaded the ground: it was again assailed. Then ensued a lawsuit, which he gained. But he had accumulated against himself so much ill-will that he was fain to accept a compromise, and allow the cricket club the use of the land for a small annual acknowledgment. Then, again, as lord of the manor he had heriot rights over two farms; and on the death of one of the farmers, he demanded the two best horses out of his stable. He had a right to the horses; but to exact his right was unwise, and brought on him bitter ill-will. There was a copious and unfailing spring in his stable-yard. The villagers were badly off for drinking-water, they were supplied with surface-water collected in tanks. This failed in dry summers, and they came with their cans and pails to his pump. He bore the inconvenience a little while; but when a farmer sent a barrel on a cart to be filled, he put a chain and padlock on the pump, and refused to remove it, and allow of water being taken from his well except at an acknowledgment—every cottager to pay him a shilling per annum, and every farmer five.

The dislike felt for the retired merchant who had set up as squire extended to his nephew; and Gabriel was jeered at when he rode out, and had stones or mud thrown at him when he showed himself in the village street. He was conscious of his own deficiencies, because told of them by his uncle, and because they were flung contemptuously in his face by the village lads. At the same time, his position as heir to the estate and house made him proud, or rather—for there is dignity in pride—conceited. Thus he grew up a mixture of diffidence and vanity. At the lodge lived a woman who had been wife of the boatman of the former squire, a Cornish woman, named Cable. She was left with an only daughter.

Her husband had been drowned one night going out in a punt after wild fowl. Mr. Jeremy Gotham kept her as a lodge-keeper, and she did charing in the house. The daughter was two or three years older than Gabriel, a strong handsome girl, determined in character; and she constituted herself the protector of the young squire. When he had been assailed with stones or bad words, he would tell her; and if she knew the name of the offender, and he was of or near her age, she would chastise him with her fist or with a stick. She often rowed him out, when he had a fancy to be on the sea, and looked after him—that he had his greatcoat with him; that he wore his muffler; that he did not wet his feet, or, if they were wet, that he changed his socks as soon as he came home. This sort of intimacy had sprung up when they were children, and continued when they had grown up. No one thought seriously of it, as she was older than he, full of sense and strength of purpose; and he, a weak, washed-out creature without manliness. Nevertheless, she became attached to him. She was one of those strong characters which do not look for a support, but to become a support, and find satisfaction in sustaining the feeble creeper that pulls itself aloft by its means. There were several young fishermen in Hanford who tried to get Bessie Cable to walk out of a Sunday with them; but she gave encouragement to none, and finally left the place as servant to Mrs. Giles Gotham of Newcastle, who had taken a fancy to her when on a visit to her brother-in-law. Mrs. Giles could never get on with her servants, and laid all the blame on the Newcastle girls. If she could induce a young woman to come to her from a distance, she would be sure of keeping her for a twelvemonth. Moreover, the mother of Bessie being in the service of the Gotham family, the daughter might be reckoned on to do her utmost to have the interest of the Gothams at heart. The handiness, the willingness, the robustness of Bessie, pleased Mrs. Giles; and so Bessie, whom her mother relinquished somewhat reluctantly, departed with her to Newcastle.

Gabriel remained with his uncle some time after his mother left. He was now a young man, who looked as if a good shake would shake him to pieces. His legs and arms hung too loosely to his trunk, his back was bent. He never, apparently, could get a tailor to master the conformation of his body and clothe him well. He maundered about, after Bessie was gone, much at a loss for a companion. He had

clung to her and made an associate of her, had looked up to her and trusted her; and very forlorn he felt when deprived of her company and protection.

One day, a few months later, Mrs. Cable died suddenly of a stroke. The distance from Newcastle was too great for Bessie to come down to the funeral, and the poor woman left but a few trifles for Bessie to inherit. These Gabriel undertook to have put away safely for her.

Before Christmas, Gabriel went home to Newcastle, taking with him such things of her mother's as Bessie wanted. His uncle was reluctant to let him depart, but could not dispute the right of his parents to reclaim him for a while. At Easter, Gabriel was to return to Hanford Hall. But at Easter Gabriel did not appear; at mid-summer, however, he did looking the same—a limp creature without vigour of body or mind. What had happened in the interim between him and Bessie, his parents and uncle—only these interested parties—knew. What had occurred was this. On his return to Newcastle with plenty of money, which his uncle had given him, Gabriel was delighted to renew his friendship with Bessie. But circumstances were different. She was servant in his father's house, and that house was in the town. She had her duties, and could not row him on the sea or saunter with him in the garden. He found his way down into the kitchen, to complain to her about his mother's tyrannical ways; but Mrs. Giles came after him and pinned a dishclout to his coat, and warned him not to go below stairs again.

Gabriel was almost a stranger in Newcastle, and had no friends there of his own sex and age. He was not a man to make friends, except of boys and girls. He was not muscular enough to feel himself the equal of those of his own age; he could not cricket, or shoot, or play billiards. If he found a boy before whom he could swagger, he would take him up for a day or two and patronise him and give him tartlets; but boys speedily found him out, and despised him and deserted him; occasionally, he caught them caricaturing him. Girls did not pay him attention; they slighted him; only Bessie Cable stood by him, ready to fight his battles and hold him up, and be to him the tower of strength he needed. His father despised him; his mother bullied him; but Bessie loved him with infinite pity and disinterested fidelity. He was flattered and touched, and in his loneliness drew towards her the more because forbidden to associate with her.

One day, both had disappeared from Mr. Giles Gotham's house. Gabriel had persuaded Bessie to elope with him over the Scottish frontier and to be married. Married they were in Scotland; and from Scotland, Gabriel wrote to his father and his uncle announcing the step he had taken. He received no answer from either. He remained in Scotland with his Bessie for some weeks, as long as his money lasted, the money wherewith he had been provided by his uncle; and when that was expended, he wrote for more. Then he heard from Mr. Jeremy Gotham. His uncle was furious. He would disinherit him, unless he at once separated from the low-born maid-of-all-work he had mated with, and whom Mr. Jeremy absolutely refused to acknowledge. Then, Gabriel wrote a penitent letter to his father. Mr. Giles came to Scotland, and discovered that the marriage could be invalidated. According to the Act of Parliament on the subject, one of the parties contracting a marriage in Scotland must have been resident there twenty-one days previous to the ceremony. Gabriel had not resided there with Bessie the full time: it was short by exactly five hours; therefore, the marriage could be upset. With Gabriel's consent, it was upset. He was in no position to earn a livelihood; he was destitute of private means; he listened to reason, as his father said, and deserted Bessie. Mr. Giles had the marriage cancelled; and when Bessie became a mother, her child was not qualified to bear his father's name.

Three years passed before she reappeared in Hanford with her boy Richard. There she remained. Of her story, nothing was known: she never spoke of it. She had lost her character whilst in service, people said; but so had many another maid, and the particulars did not transpire. Gabriel was received again into favour by his uncle. He and Bessie never met again to speak; she avoided him, as he avoided her. In his base mind rankled a sense of degradation, of shame for his desertion of the faithful creature. Her pride sustained her. She could not forgive his treachery. So she lived by herself, and reared her son, and the son did not know who was his father.

No wonder that now, after a lapse of but a little short of forty years, Mr. Gabriel Gotham started and shrank from the woman he had wronged, when she broke through her reserve and came to meet him within his own gates.

CHAPTER VI.

BESSIE.

'WHAT—what has brought you here?' asked Mr. Gabriel in a trembling voice. He had a walking-stick, and he held it horizontally with both hands, one at the ferrule, the other at the handle, and thrust it before him, as making a barrier between himself and the woman.

'Not myself—my wants and my wrongs,' she answered sternly. 'For myself I ask nothing but to be left to myself; I have no wants. My wrongs are buried in my heart, known to none but you; no—not even to my son—to your son. He has never learnt who was his father. I should cover my face with shame, were it known.'

'Then, what—what do you want, Bessie!'

'I say, I want nothing for myself. I have come here not for myself. God forbid! I would not receive anything of you for myself. No—if I were drowning as my father drowned, and as my poor son has drowned, and you held out a hand, I would clench my fist and smite it away, and sink, rather than owe my life to you.'

'Then—what is it?' asked Mr. Gotham, with his knees quaking under him. 'You agitate me.'

'No wonder that I agitate you. The wonder to me is that the agitation has not become a Saint Vitus's dance that never leaves you. God forgive me! I loved you once. I could tear my flesh off my hand with my teeth now—after these many years—at the thought that it ever held yours. I loved you!' She reared her proud form; in spite of age, it was full of nobility and reminiscence of grace and beauty. 'I loved you!' She looked at him with scorn. 'I ask myself, whenever I see you pass along the road, what could I find in you to love?'

'I was rich,' said Gotham; and as he spoke, he raised his stick level with his face, as if to ward off the blow that he deserved for the sneer.

'You coward!' cried Bessie. 'How dare you hint at that! As if I cared for anything but you. And you I cared for only because I was your help and support, your nurse almost; I cared for you because you were laughed at, cold-shouldered,

delicate, helpless, and clung to me as this babe now clings to my bosom.'

'It is of no use, Bessie,' said Gabriel, with quavering voice—'it is of no use raking up old graves—that is what Mr. Cornellis has just said.'

'It is of use,' answered the woman, 'when the bones do not lie in holy ground. The ghost will walk and flap its winding-sheet and scream in the black, still night, and you must see it and hear it. I—I have not spoken out my heart all these weary years. I have seen you, and you have seen me, but we have not spoken. I, sitting on the hard bench in the aisle, have looked to the squire's pew in the chancel, and watched you there during service. Once, when my seat was taken, I came over and occupied a bench outside your pew, and leaned back with my ear to the board, and heard your shaky pipe whine: "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things we ought not to have done, and there is no health in us." Did you feel the pew shake, that Sunday morning, Gabriel? I was not crying; I trembled with rage, and the pew trembled with me. Then you stood up and looked over; and when you saw me there outside, sitting and lying back with my eyes raised, you thought you saw a ghost, and sank again to your knees. For all these many years we have been no nearer each other than on that occasion; and then we neither spoke, but our eyes met, and I saw that baseness was in yours still.'

'Why do you talk like this, Bessie? It can do no good. You are so fierce, you frighten me. My nerves are unstrung and sensitive.'

'Unstrung and sensitive!' scoffed the woman, her noble face gathering grandeur and beauty in her passion. 'I will tell you why I talk. Because, for six-and-thirty years I have nursed my wrongs in my heart, which has boiled and boiled, but never been poured out. To whom could I pour it out? Who was to hear the story of my wrong? Was it one to shout to the parish? To publish in the papers?'

'For pity's sake, Bessie, consider me: do not speak so loud; neither of us wishes that story to be known.'

'Ah! on whom fell the shame? On me, who was innocent of all wrong, save of having loved a wretch without manliness. I could have the pity of the place if I told my tale; but what care I for pity? I let them think me a lost

woman, because I did not care to have it thought I had trusted you—*you*.'

'Well, Bessie, the marriage was not legal. The court annulled it.'

'With your consent. Could you not have made it right, had you chosen? Have made me an honest woman, and your son legitimate? No; you were mean enough to cast me over because you could not trouble yourself to fight through life in poverty. What if you had been disinherited? You need not have worked for a living; I would have worked for both. You might have sat at home with your hands in your pockets, and rocked the cradle with your foot; but you would not have had your luxuries then, and therefore I was thrust aside.'

'You cannot say, Bessie, that my father and uncle did not make you an offer that was reasonable. They promised you a yearly allowance.'

'I spurned it; I refused it. I would have nothing of theirs, nothing of yours any more. If I knew what drops in my son's veins were drawn from you, I would wring them forth. If I thought in his heart were any seeds of your baseness, I would dig them out with my nails.'

'Even now, after these many years, I will help you, if you will allow me to do it.'

'I do not want your help—not for myself I would not take anything of you for myself. I have gone on all these years alone, and now I do not need you. I worked and sustained myself and my son till he was old enough to work and sustain me. Then he married——

'If, Bessie, he had only looked higher. If you had allowed me to assist—under the rose, without letting people know the circumstances; if he could have been put into some more respectable situation, say a clerkship—why, in time——'

'If, if, if—and in time!' repeated the woman wrathfully. 'Why should he be other than my father, who was a plain man of the people? If my father had been a gentleman, perhaps he also would not have been straight and true and thorough to his wife and his child, his duties and his God. No; I would not have Richard a gentleman; he might have learned falseness and been cruel to me, as you were cruel. I have kept him in my station. He is a poor, rough, plain man, with simple thoughts and simple faith, a simple life,

and simple knowledge of right and wrong. I would not have him thrown into that tangle which you call social life, where every duty is blunted with an *if*, and every act is a patchwork of compromises.'

She paused to take breath, and then Gabriel Gotham made a movement to shuffle off.

'Stay!' she ordered. 'You are sneaking away from my reproaches; but I say to you with loud voice now only what your conscience says to you nightly in whispers. You can do nothing for me now. You could do nothing for me after that one great act of treachery. Then, then only did I measure to the bottom of your baseness. If you had come to me later and said you would remarry me, I would have refused you, because I knew you, and I could never have trusted you more.'

'What do you mean by bullying me so!' whined the miserable man. 'You have no consideration for my nerves. You do not know, or if you know, you do not think, what a martyr I am to them; and you tear at my nerves as if you were ripping a harp to pieces. You used to be more kind and pitiful.'

'If you had kept me by your side,' said the woman with a touch of softness, as the appeal of weakness always did melt her, 'I do not think that you would have done amiss for your own self, Gabriel.' She looked at him steadily, and the glare went out of her eyes. 'A poor, pitiful, broken creature you are, who has slipped into bad ways, because he has none that love him by his side to check and rally him. You are killing yourself, not by inches, but by feet, with opium, Gabriel, as all Hanford knows.'

'I take my drops because I suffer such pain.'

She disregarded his explanation. 'A lonely, unhappy man, suspicious of all about you; preyed upon by the designing; clinging to those that are unscrupulous, who flatter you because they seek your money. You have no one near you to bar the way you are stumbling down; no one to give you a hand to help you up; no one to cheer your spirits when evil fancies and buried transgressions start up to frighten you.—I say, Gabriel, that had you acted as a man and a Christian, you would not be the God-forsaken wretch you now are. You would have a faithful woman at your side to stay you; and a gallant son, on whom you could look with pride and love; and seven little angels to intercede with heaven for you.—

Look at these!'—she turned her head to the children who were hanging to her skirts—'see here!' She threw back the shawl and exposed the sleeping babe she carried. She gazed down with a softened face on the slumbering infant. 'A dry stick,' she said, raising her head, and recovering some of her sternness; 'that is what you are; and in my house is Aaron's rod that buddeth, and putteth forth blossoms, and beareth almonds. You, the wrong-doer, are accursed and barren. I, the wronged, am blessed, as a bedewed field.' Then, all at once, her tears burst forth. 'No!' she said; 'my Aaron's rod is cut asunder, and all the little blossoms will wither. I am like the prophet who took to him two rods, and he called the one Beauty, and the other Bands; and first was Beauty broken, and then the strong rod also.—Do you see these three children? There are four more, and all are orphans. They have lost their mother eleven months ago, and now their father is taken from them. My Richard is drowned, as was his grandfather; and these little ones have none to look to but me. I am getting on in years.' She recovered her composure with an effort; what she had to say concerned the children and their welfare, and she would not allow her own emotion to interfere with her purpose for their advantage. 'I am getting on in years. You, Gabriel, are younger than me; but I am still the strong one. For a while I may be able to earn enough to support the seven; but one is a babe, and I cannot leave it and take work. They do not bear your name, yet they have your blood in them. For myself, I ask nothing; I would take nothing; but I ask you not to forget these orphans, your own grandchildren.'

'I—will do something,' faltered Gotham. He had lowered his stick when Bessie's rough tone passed away, and now he leaned one hand on it and shook his head, and shuffled his feet on the gravel. 'But, Bessie, I must do it slyly. I mustn't let it be supposed that any obligation attaches to me. I particularly do not wish to have that unfortunate affair brought up now. I—I dislike to have my private matters talked about. I am sensitive, and the least trouble affects my nerves.'

'I am not going to speak; rely on me,' said Bessie gravely. 'Let all the past be dead, buried the wrong and the sin. Forgiveness is a hard plant to grow; it does not strike root freely. I cannot say that it grows lustily in my bosom. There is certain soil in which it will not thrive,

nurse it how you may.—But, as for these children, I can do much for them. For their sakes I have come here to-day, for their sakes I plead. I would not die and leave them destitute in the world, beautiful little maids—seven of them, fatherless motherless, friendless. For their sakes I will strike my plant Forgiveness once more, and pray God to make it flourish.'

'I will consult with Mr. Cornellis; I will take his opinion how best to manage it; I will do something.'

'Consult with no one but your own conscience, and on your knees with God,' said Bessie Cable.

'I cannot—I cannot act without advice.'

'It has always been so,' said she, half impatiently, half sadly. 'You never were able in the old days to do anything by yourself. Then you came to me. Now you go elsewhere.

'I assure you that I will do something. Mr. Cornellis knows all about the matter.'

Just then, Mr. Gotham felt something touch his hand. Little Susie, attracted by his ring, had deserted the skirts of her grandmother, and, unnoticed, had stolen over to Mr. Gotham, and as his hand hung limply down, she took his finger in her small hands and began to pull at the ring.

'What—what is it?' he asked with a start. Then he looked down and saw the fair head, the sweet face, with blue eyes and delicate complexion. A lovely little child, with a truly angel face. Gabriel studied it, nervously twitching his head from side to side, and asked: 'What is your name, my dear?'

'Susie.'

'Do you want my ring? You shall have it; and keep it as a proof that—that—— Bessie, I will do what is right by the little ones. It is a pretty child, and might—might do me credit. I think I trace a likeness to myself, when about the same age; she has my hair and my eyes and complexion.'

The little girl still held his finger, and twisted the golden hoop. The touch of the tiny fingers was one so strange to Gabriel, the beauty of the child was so attractive, and its confidence so engaging, that the feeble man was moved.

'I would like to kiss you, child—Susie,' he said, 'but I am afraid of stooping. I might fall; it would bring on neuralgic pains.—Would you mind, Bessie, holding her up, that I might kiss her?'

The woman hesitated. She had the baby in her arms. She could not do as required unless she disposed of it. She

stooped, laid the shawl on the gravel at Mr. Gotham's feet, then placed the sleeping infant gently upon it. She put her hands to Susie and raised the child, whilst the other little girl, Lettice, stood by, still holding her grandmother's skirt; but she now extended the other hand and grasped Gotham's cane low down, about two feet from the ferrule. Thus, unconsciously, the child Lettice linked these two together; and at the same moment he pressed his lips to the cheeks of Susie.

Susie turned her face sharply away—the smell of opium oppressed her. 'I want the ring,' she said.

Then, an explosion, followed by a clatter of bells in the church tower hard at hand, and a cheer. 'What is the matter?' asked Gotham with a start.

The explosion was caused, as he guessed, by the discharge of a small cannon on the shore, fired on grand occasions.

The side-gate opened, and Mr. Cornellis came in, walking quickly. He drew back when he saw the group. 'What!' he exclaimed, 'attacked by a swarm of mosquitoes, Gabriel. Drawing your blood, eh?—Mrs. Cable, you had better run home. Your son has returned; and the lads are giving him an ovation.'

'I want my ring,' said little Susie.

'Another time,' answered Gabriel nervously. 'I—I—had better not. It would lead to inquiries: it might rouse suspicion; and my nerves must not be shaken. I cannot bear it. I will send you some sweeties; but I cannot part with my ring.'

CHAPTER VII.

AN INSULT.

Gabriel eagerly caught the arm of Mr. Cornellis, and passing his hand through it, suffered himself to be led away from the gate through the winding drive to the house. He did not look back to see the woman and children; his shuffling feet moved hastily, and his arm and head were jerked forward spasmodically, indicating eagerness to get away from an interview that had distressed him.

Mr. Cornellis helped him up the steps and in at his door, and almost led the way to the library, a snug little room,

where, indeed, were a few books, but where very little study was done.

Gabriel let himself down into his easy-chair with a groan, and held out his stick to Cornellis, who took it and put it on a rack where Gotham kept an array of hunting-whips and walking-sticks and fishing-rods. The wretched creature was full of small vanities. He liked to deceive himself and others into the belief that he was a strong athletic man, only deterred from showing his powers by his nervous malady. He talked as if he hunted and shot and fished; but he did none of these things—he never had. He had long given up boating, because the damp and cold on the water brought on neuralgia; and he rarely mounted his horse, because he was too weak to endure the jolting. He had his top-boots, his corduroys, and scarlet coat: but he never wore them except once, to be painted in them. He had a sailor's blue jersey, a complete boating costume, which he put on occasionally, but wore it about the house and grounds, not on the sea. His gun was never discharged, not even at sparrows and starlings, because the noise so near his ear shocked his highly strung and irritable nerves.

He was made up of pretence. Now he was playing with a new assumption, and Justin Cornellis helped to amuse him with it, and flatter him into belief that there was reality in it. This new assumption was that he was going to contest the county at the next general election. He never asked himself whether he seriously contemplated the expense and effort; he amused himself with talking about the campaign, making sketches of electioneering addresses, and drawing up lists of voters who must be canvassed. So little in earnest was Mr. Gotham that he had not decided on his politics; he rather thought of standing as an Independent candidate, but whether the shade was to be Liberal Conservative or Conservative Liberal remained undetermined.

Justin Cornellis humoured and flattered him in all his pretences, affected to regard them as serious, and obtained great influence over him accordingly. He never laughed at Gotham, who was sensitive to ridicule, having a lurking consciousness of his inability to do those things to which he pretended. He was incapable of judging for himself, and felt about him for some one stronger than himself to whom he could appeal, and on whom devolve irksome and perplexing duties.

The management of his property was beyond his abilities, and he was jealous and suspicious of every solicitor and agent whom he employed. He had no power of concentrating his attention for long on any subject, or of supervising accounts, or considering the nature of the leases and agreements he was required to sign. He invited Mr. Cornellis, as a disinterested person, to assist him, and soon delegated everything he could delegate to him, to save himself the trouble of going into the matter. He had himself thrust his neighbour the ex-missionary into the position of unpaid agent for his property, which consisted not only of the manor of Hanford, but of houses in London, and investments in various securities foreign and domestic. His uncle had been a shrewd business man, so also had been his father, and till the death of the latter, Gabriel had allowed Mr. Giles to manage his money matters for him, satisfied so long as he had enough to spend; but after the death of his father, he had put his affairs in several hands, changing out of suspicion that he was being defrauded, and invariably being most apprehensive of dishonesty in the more upright men, because they were straightforward and did not flatter him.

With his usual inherent meanness, he played a part with Cornellis. He was related to Justin Cornellis, whose mother had been a Gotham; and it was partly for his wife's health, and chiefly to be near a man of means to the reversion of whose estate he might lay claim, that Cornellis had settled at Hanford. Mr. Gabriel Gotham encouraged the ex-missionary to think that he would inherit the property after his, Gabriel's, death—without, however, having really so by will disposed of his property. By holding out this hope before Cornellis, he secured his fidelity and obtained his services.

But Gabriel Gotham was only an extreme instance of that shallow pretence which cloaks the life of every one of us who moves in society. Our very waistcoats are a pretence: they assume to be all cloth, and are only cloth on the front that shows; they are calico behind. And so is it with our manners, our conversation: it is all only half what it pretends to be; the cloth does not go the whole way round the heart. We have smiles and a squeeze of the hand for an acquaintance—a front of cordiality, a back of indifference. We are liberal in opinion, generous in action, frank in demeanour, sympathetic in intercourse; but the backing is all narrowness, meanness, closeness, and selfishness. The writer once thus addressed

a little boy: 'Why, Fred, what an extraordinary fit your nether garments are!'—'Yes, sir,' answered Fred; 'they are reversible. When I've sat out one side, I turn 'em about and sit out the other.' Which of us dare reverse our moral garment, that has only one face good? Which of us dare expose the calico and hide the cloth? Yet let the moralist growl: there is merit in pretence. The world would be an unendurable world were it not for the painted screens, and the disguises which conceal its ugliness, its waste and lumber. What pleasure should we reap from social intercourse, were our acquaintance to tell us exactly what they thought of us? Do they not exercise self-restraint in hiding from us that we bore them? Why should the worst side be thrust to the fore? Every picture has two sides, every flower has an ugly sordid root. We show the blossom of life to our neighbours, and do not thrust the root into their faces. The man who blurts out all his mind, and the woman who despises conventionalities, are shunned—they are agreeable to no one, not even to themselves. To a meal belong empty wine-bottles, potato parings, cabbage stalks, old bones, and fag-ends of grizzle, together with cinders and dust from the kitchen fire; but also very good wine and toothsome dishes. The ash-heap and the pig-pail get the first, and we the rest. We are not swine, to be given the refuse; nor scavengers, to carry off the dust. Life is a milk-pan; and to it belong cream and sediment; we exhibit the cream and cast away the sediment; we retain the thin skimmed milk for our private consumption. Then, not a word against pretence! It invests life with grace; it saves it from becoming material. Without it, life is not worth having.

There is even heroic virtue in pretence. It is generous, it is unselfish. We offer the best to others; we keep the thin and poor for ourselves. Our neighbours know that what we offer is superficial; but they are superficial likewise, and give us back in return their best—hearty welcome, smiles, cheerful conversation—in a word, they give us all their cream. When our faces have vanished, they sit down to sup 'sky-blue.' The fire blazes in the drawing-room for the visitor; but the lady shivers at her needlework in her fireless room upstairs. The visitor enjoys the warmth for ten minutes; she endures the cold the long day, because the coal-bill is too heavy to allow of a second fire. The visitor has hot mutton; when he is gone, the family eats the cold remains. The visitor has the

silver candlestick, and every one else a benzoline lamp. For the guest, the best Worcester or Swansea service is produced; when he is gone, it is put away, and the household dines off very cheap chipped ware. The guest, if very young and green, goes away impressed with the comfortable circumstances of his late host.

Then, I say again, not a word against pretence; it is one of the first of human virtues.

There are pretences and pretences. Mr. Gabriel Gotham was contemptible because his pretences profited no one; not because they were in themselves pretence. We are selfish in our estimate of pretence. We condone, even applaud that which conduces to our own comfort, and blame and deprecate that out of which we reap no advantage.

'So, they have been here sponging,' said Mr. Cornellis. 'I knew it would be so. But the old woman did not know her man. She thought you soft, weak, easily moved by the tale of misery. The whole thing was cleverly got up, a theatrical effect—the baby, the twins. But you see through these sort of things. Not so soft as supposed, eh, Gabriel?'

'Mrs. Cable thought her son was drowned, and was in distress about the children.'

'O yes—of course. Yet the bells are ringing for the return of Richard. She knew he was safe; but she wanted to wrest a promise of help from you before the news reached you. It was ingenious, but not honest. With another man, it might have succeeded, but not with you.'

'No,' said Gabriel, dispiritedly; 'perhaps not with me. She said I was weak. Indeed, she was not polite.'

'Tried the domineering dodge, did she?' said Cornellis. 'Had no consideration for your nerves?'

'None in the least,' answered Gabriel. 'What I have suffered is more than words can describe—I will ring the bell. I must have some Chartreuse; I am so shaken, so overcome by the scene. It was very distressing to me.—You will have some of the liqueur also. I feel as if I should sink if I did not take some; and all my nerves are in a quiver.'

'If she comes again, send her to me.'

'I will do so, Cornellis; I cannot endure another interview.'

'You have made no promise.'

'I—I only said that if the children were really left orphans, I would consider what was to be done. I would not let them

starve; but I made the condition that nothing was to transpire; and I thought it would be wise for me to manage the matter through you, so that no suspicion might attach to me, and because I really am not equal to the fatigue and excitement. Bessie is a very alarming woman, so impulsive, threatening.'

'That is like you, ever cautious and prudent. Ah! what a man you are!' exclaimed Cornellis; 'always ready at an emergency. And with those shattered nerves too! If I did not see it, it would seem incredible.'

The Chartreuse was brought in. Gabriel's hand shook so that he was unable to fill the liqueur glasses; therefore Mr. Cornellis helped his friend and himself. As he was sipping his Chartreuse, he laughed, and put down the glass.

'What is it?' asked Gotham, with a suspicious twitch in his mouth. He disliked to hear laughter; he thought that he was the object of derision.

'I was thinking of the condition of those Cables,' said the ex-missionary. 'Supposing they carried their point, and all the seven little brats became heiresses of your estate, what a scramble there would be among the ragtag of the place for them! What airs the young misses would give themselves! How they would flout about in fine feathers and silks, and brag of their grandfather, talking in their broad vulgar Essex dialect, so close akin to Cockney, of wessels and winegar and poins and wiolets.'

'Very funny,' sniggered Gotham. 'But they have not got my property yet.'

'And never will,' said Cornellis. 'If you wanted to send them to the bad, you could not better insure their ruin. They make respectable mudlarks. Dress them in peacock plumes, and they become vulgar fowl.'

'They are pretty,' said Gotham.

'As children. But with that class, good looks disappear early. Good looks associated with bad manners, dirty nails, fine clothes, and dropped *h*s, make a hideous muddle.'

'I suppose you are right,' said Gabriel with a sigh. He thought of the little hand closed about his finger, and the warm sense that stole from it up his arm to his heart. 'Poor little things! They have my blood in them—that accounts for their good looks.'

'But how diluted with ditch-water! If Richard had married some one of a superior class, there might have been

improvement; but as it is, the deterioration is irretrievable.'

'You know what I have done, Justin,' said Mr. Gotham, after a pause. 'Give me another glass of Chartreuse; I spilled half the last, my hand shakes so.'

'I beg your pardon. What have you done?'

'You know what I have done. I could not manage in any other way to keep my memory clear of reproach and to save my conscience. I have left everything to you, and you have my secret instructions. Should Richard be ever in want of money, you will let him have it; and the little girls must not be allowed to need. You will manage all that for me. I am a poor frail creature, and may drop off any day.'

'Not a bit—not a bit. You have to become an M.P. yet, squire. It will do you good to contest an election. By Jove! I would not be the man to stand against you, known as you are, and respected in the county, and generally beloved.'

'I am respected, I believe.'

'And loved. Every one sympathises with your infirmities.'

'They are temporary. I may look to a time when I shall be able to go out after the hounds, and speak and take my place in the House without being subject to these neuralgic attacks.'

'Certainly you may. I believe they have been brought on by worry. This wretched affair of the Cable woman has tormented you for years.'

'For near on forty years,' said Gotham.

'You have felt that something must be done, and yet you could not, with respect for yourself, your name and position, in any way countenance a claim. Now you have, with your usual sagacity, hit on a mode of extrication out of the dilemma. Rely on me. I am a plain, straightforward man, and I will execute your wishes with fidelity, should the time come when I am called on to do so; but——' Cornellis laughed. 'By Jove! Gotham, which is the most likely to outlive the other? I have been battered about in the East and in Africa, and have had fevers and privations; whilst you—you tough old fox-hunting squire, lapped in luxury, have a constitution like heart of oak, only temporarily troubled by neuralgia—all brought about by external worry—produced by that insinuating woman. Don't tell me the contrary—she ran away with you. She was half-a-dozen years older than yourself.'

'Only two.'

'A woman ripens before a man in wits as in everything else. She drew you on—it was a plant; and uncommonly lucky you were to get out of your difficulty as you did. I am not sure, you clever dog, that you had not prepared the loop-hole beforehand.'

'On my honour, it was not so.'

'In love, as in war, all is fair,' said Cornellis. 'In this little game the play was first-rate. It was checkmate after the first two moves.'

Mr. Gotham held out his glass for more liqueur. 'As Richard has returned, it is possible that Josephine may not be lost,' he said, as Mr. Cornellis poured out the Chartreuse.

'She is not lost; she has come home.'

'What—Josephine! How did she escape?'

'In a somewhat singular manner. She was blown out to sea, and picked up by the lightship, which also lost its moorings, and was wrecked on a sandbank.'

'What—Richard and Josephine?'

'Yes, Cable was in the vessel.'

'But not the boy. I heard he had come ashore before the gale, so that Richard was alone in the boat.'

'No, the boy was not there.'

'Only Richard and Josephine. That was quite romantic—Paul and Virginia.'

Mr. Cornellis bit his lip. 'Excuse me, Gabriel; I do not like this joke. You are clever and witty, but my daughter must not be made a subject of your satire.'

'Ah! Cornellis,' said Gabriel with a sigh, 'that was a pity, that marriage of Richard's. If he had but looked above him. If, for instance, he could have aspired to your Josephine.'

'He would not have had her,' said Cornellis.

'Why not? I could then, perhaps, have done something for him through you.'

'I would not have suffered it.' The ex-missionary for a moment lost his temper. 'I could not allow my daughter to marry a common sailor, and one who is without a father.'

Gabriel fidgeted in his chair, with his elbows on the arms of the seat, and spilt his Chartreuse down his waistcoat. 'I was but supposing a case,' he said—'supposing it for my own convenience. If I had particularly wished it, Justin, perhaps you would have yielded. The fellow has good blood in his veins, you know, though the world does not know it.'

'Exactly—the world does not; and we must consider the

opinion of the world. A man may have the blood of a peer; but if he is not in Debrett, he is a commoner to me. Let us change the subject, Gabriel. Let us go over together the list of the voters.'

'Not now, Justin; I cannot attend to business. Do you not see how white, how twitching my poor cheek is? There is a nerve which reaches from the brain down the whole side of the system to the small toe—that nerve is just as though pulled and twisted and nipped with pincers. I am in indescribable pain. I cannot remain here any longer. You will allow me to go upstairs; I must have recourse to my drops for relief. Take some more Chartreuse. There is noyau, if you prefer it, or absinthe. You will not be offended if I leave you. I have been over-wrought. I shall not be in a condition to see you till to-morrow afternoon; I must have complete rest after the trials and exertions of to-day.' He shuffled to the door.

Cornellis did not remain after Gotham retired. He was angered out of his usual equanimity; the suggestion made by the wretched man had stung him like an insult. 'That he should dare—should dare to think of such a thing!' he muttered as he walked back to Rose Cottage. 'My Josephine and his——' He clenched his fist, and did not complete his sentence.

CHAPTER VIII.

PAT-A-CAKE.

The cottage inhabited by Mrs. Cable with her grandchildren, and by Richard, her son, when ashore, was small, built of boards, painted white, with green windows, and a vivid green door. A good many houses in this part were of wood. When a wreck was broken up, the planks of the deck sold very cheap, were bought, and served for the construction of cottages; they were laid on, feathered or weather-boarded, so that no joint could let in wind and rain. In the west of England such houses would not last; the ever moist atmosphere would bring about rot; but along the east coast the sun is hot and the air dry, and these wooden houses will endure for a century. The cottage was tiled; and over the brown tiles was laid a trellis of wood, on which a vine was stretched. The vine

was not allowed to extend over the wooden walls; but it rioted on the roof and there ripened its purple clusters. That was a great day for the elder of the seven children when father ascended a ladder and scrambled over the roof, plucking the grape bunches, sweet and warm from the sun's kisses, and gave a cluster to each.

Between the road and the cottage was a narrow strip of garden, hedged with sweetbriar. In this strip grew tulips, narcissi, polyanthi, and velvety, brown, yellow-eyed auriculas. The soil suited bulbs, as does that of Holland.

The principal garden was at the back of the cottage; it covered an acre, and extended to a ditch and a line of willows, fine trees that whitened in every wind. In those willows the nightingales built every year. Near the dike also grew a large ungainly mulberry; it had been originally a branch of an old tree, cut off by a former inhabitant of the cottage who had been gardener at the Hall; and he had stuck the branch into the soil of his own garden, where it had taken root and grown into a tree that bore fruit in due season, but never grew into a gainly, goodly tree. Nor could the children enjoy all its fruit, for it leaned towards the dike, and dropped many of its fleshy berries into the water, where they floated, nibbled at by tadpoles and gudgeon. But there were enough for the little ones shed upon the gravel and grass, and they picked them up at the time when they fell, and put them in bottles with sugar, and ate them as they listed, smearing their lips and hands with purple.

In the hedge were some sloe bushes clipped like thorns, and the bitter blue berries were also eagerly sought by the children; but they were not suffered to pick the bullace, tiny round plums off a small tree in the angle of the garden. These grandmother made into preserves against the season when there was no fruit.

Now was spring, and there was promise of yield; the storm had torn off the petals of the apples, but the low-growing bullace and the sloe blossoms had set before the storm.

The children were all out in the sun, sitting on the bank, with the sloe bushes behind them. They wore no hats or caps; the light air played with their shining yellow hair. They sat watching their father, who was digging in the garden; and Mary, the eldest, had the baby on her lap. Grandmother was within, engaged on household duties. Numerous white butterflies were about, chasing each other, gamboling over the

broccoli plants, and seemed like flickering willow leaves adrift in the air. Every Essex garden along the coast has its bed of white poppies. The people suffering from ague and low fever have faith in the decoction of the round seed-vessels; but there were no poppies in Cable's garden. Bessie had never approved of the use of the narcotic, because her mother had insisted that, in Cornwall, folks got on very well without it.

Richard had a bundle of peasticks; and after he had earthed up his early potatoes, he began to stake the delicate trailing peas that were already bursting into white blossom. They should have been staked before; but his duties on the lightship had prevented his attending to them earlier.

Little Susie sat nearest the herb-bed, which was laid out on the slope to the hedge, and faced the sun. A way to the beach went behind this hedge; it had a wall between it and the garden—a low wall, three feet high, and from the wall into the garden sloped the bank. On top of it grew the sloes. The wall and bank ended at the dike, and thence the path dissipated itself in strands of gravel among coarse turf; a trodden way from the village led to the expanse of wild ground, and from the edge of that every one went his own path.

The herbs grown on this bank were thyme, marjoram, mint, and rue. Baby, asleep on Mary's lap, had a handful of crushed young leaves of mint in her tiny grasp. She had been allowed to feel and smell the fresh leaves, and had grabbed them to thrust them into her mouth. When plucked away she had retained a handful, and gone to sleep still holding it.

The bees were busy over the garden, searching in the full sweet flowers; and Susie watched a great bumble which was clogging his hind legs with pollen from the blossoms, when she was startled to see something like a big spider creep from under the leafy sloes and run down among the thyme towards her. It was a thin white human hand, with the nerves strongly accentuated, and the blue veins puffed on the back. On one finger was a gold ring with a bloodstone in it, engraved with arms. Susie knew nothing of arms, but she recognised the ring, and the bottle-green cuff on the arm to which the hand belonged; and throwing herself over on her breast, she laid hold of the hand with both hers, and proceeded to pull at the ring, which she had failed to secure two days before in the grounds of the Hall.

As she lay among the thyme trying to get the ring off, she saw under the dense foliage of the sloes, between the stems, the face of the gentleman who had spoken to granny in the Hall grounds. She could make out that it was the same; she saw his pale blue watery eyes and his thin nose. The sun shone now on one side of his nose, and she thought that she could see crimson on the other side instead of shadow. He held his finger up to his lips and nose, and his head nodded.

Susie tugged at the hand and twisted the ring, but could not get it off.

'What are you about, Susie?—crushing the thyme?' called her father.

The little child turned her golden head round, let go the finger, and made some answer which Richard did not catch and understand. When Susie looked again for the hand, it was withdrawn.

Voices were audible on the path behind the hedge.

'What! Mr. Gotham, you here? Come out to solicit votes from the winkles, or to tally-ho after the crabs?'

'I—I don't like being chaffed,' answered the gentleman.—'I am glad to see you, dear Josephine, after your fortunate escape from the sea.'

'To-day is the last meet of the harriers,' said the girl. 'Why are you not with them? Cousin Gotham, are not you something like the crab and lobster, that assume their scarlet when their hunting days are over, and they are boiled and done for?'

'Your peril of life has not improved you,' complained Gabriel. 'You are very hard and unkind.'

'I!' laughed the girl. 'Not a bit; only I do not humbug you, like others. Now I must leave you.'

'What are you doing here, so far from home?'

'I have come to thank my preserver and see his little ones, for whom I have brought some sweetmeats.'

'You came across the turf, I suppose?'

'Yes. Have I been trespassing? Will you prosecute me?'

Richard Cable had heard Josephine's voice and what she said. He stood upright, holding a pea-stick, and his face became of a warm colour. He hesitated whether to leave his work and go to the bank and speak to her over the hedge, or remain where he was, and wait till she came. Whilst he hesitated, he heard her calling him from behind the dike.

'Mr. Cable! Have you a plank? I will come over to you this way, instead of going round by the street.'

'There is a bridge, miss, a little farther down.'

He threw down the stick, and walked along the brink of the ditch to the end, and opened a wicket-gate that closed the passage over a plank.

She tripped across and came through the gate. 'Where are the children?' she asked; then answered herself: 'Oh—there! sitting in the sun. What yellow heads they all have, and blue eyes. How many? Seven, did you say? I see but six. Ah! one carries the baby. What a frightful burden a baby must be—like an imposition at school.'

'Did you ever, when a little child, go out a walk in spring and dig up a primrose, and carry it home in the lap of your pinafore?' asked Cable.

'I did not wear pinafores when I went out of doors.'

'Of your frock, then?'

'I daresay I may have done so.'

'It was a burden; but it was a delight. I have seven little roots of primroses in my arms, and I carry them gladly wherever I go, thinking nothing of their weight,' said Richard Cable. 'Love lightens burdens.'

'If ever I did dig up a flower, you may be sure I made the nurse carry it for me.'

'I will let no one carry mine for me,' he said, and caught up the baby and kissed it; then Mary, held her to his heart a moment and set her down again; then Susie, Effie, Jane, Martha, Lettice; and as he held up each, he named the child, only the baby he did not name—that was Bessie, called after his mother. 'Look here, Miss Cornellis; Bessie is wearing the socks I knitted when we were wrecked. I finished them before I got home.'

'I am not surprised at the children loving you,' said Josephine. 'I should love any one who cared for me.'

'Have you no one to do that?'

She shook her head. 'My father—after his fashion; my aunt—after hers; neither, no one—after yours.'

He looked at her attentively. It seemed to him indeed a marvellous thing that this beautiful girl should complain of lack of love.

'Go on,' she said, 'with your gardening. 'I will not disturb you. Let me sit on the bank with the children and talk

to them, and watch you, and I will sing to them a song and feed them with sweetmeats.'

Then, almost reluctantly, he returned to the planting of the pea-rods; and as he worked he looked across between the alder-sticks at Josephine, who had taken a place on the sloping bank and thrown off her hat, as the shadow of the twinkling willows fell athwart the place she had selected. She took out a cornet from a small basket she carried, and the children instinctively gathered round her.

'It is a duty,' she said to herself—'a duty that must be gone through. I promised Cable to visit and play with his white mice.' Then, as she held up a candied elval plum, and the little creatures raised themselves towards it with wide eyes and open mouths, and their golden hair rolled back over their shoulders—'After all, the creatures are pretty, and perhaps less insupportable than most children are,' she said to herself.

She wore a light dress, with a crimson ribbon about her throat supporting a gold locket. There were crimson bows on her pretty dress, sprigged and spotted with rose. The red agreed with her dark hair and complexion.

Richard Cable continued to observe her as he worked. He was flattered and pleased that she took notice of his children and sat down among them to amuse them.

She sang to them. She had a rich, cultivated voice; she sang the same mermaid's air that she had sung in the stranded ship—the song from *Oberon*. Richard Cable could not understand the words, knew nothing of the origin of the song; but he recalled the melody at once—a lovely melody, lovely among all the beautiful creations of Weber. Josephine took little Bessie, the baby, in her arms, and swayed the child as she sang—

> O wie wogt es sich schön auf der Fluth,
> Wenn die müde Welle im Schlummer ruht!

Cable signed to Mary, who looked round to her father with a pleased face; and Mary started to her feet and ran to him when he beckoned.

'Bring me her hat; do not let her see,' whispered Cable.

Then the child rejoined the group, and presently returned with the straw hat of Josephine.

Richard had stooped to the border of red double daisies and gathered some, and these he now thrust under the red ribbon

that girded the white straw. Then he resumed his work; and when Josephine had ceased she heard a whistle, soft and sweet, repeating from among the pea-sticks the air of the mermaid's song.

'Hark, hark!' exclaimed Josephine, laughing; 'do you hear the nightingale? It has caught my air.'

'No!' said little Effie. 'It is dada whistling.'

'He knows that tune,' said Mary. 'He has whistled it since he came home to us.'

Richard Cable had not known it before he heard the girl sing it on the stranded lightship; after that, he could not shake it out of his head. Why did not Cable leave his work and go up to the girl and speak to her? Was his work of so great importance that it could not be neglected for a few minutes? Was his time so precious that he could devote none of it to her? No; he was afraid of her. He was indeed attracted by her; but the attraction she exercised on him alarmed him. He had thought a good deal about her since he had returned home; as the tune of the mermaid's song hung about his memory, so did her face, so did the words she had said, the intonation of her voice, the movements of her graceful body. All the time that she sang and played with his children, he was aware of a power exerted to draw him to her through the barrier he built up between of pea-sticks. Nevertheless, he would not yield to the force, because he had an instinctive consciousness that it was harmful to him, would disturb his peace of mind, and trouble his relations to his children. She, also, as she sat with the children, wanted him to leave his gardening and come to her. She was drawn to him by his simplicity, his sympathy, gentleness, and truth—qualities she did not meet with in her own home, and which possessed a strange fascination for her. She had told him to continue his work, but was vexed that he had taken her at her word.

'Then she called out: 'Come here, Mr. Cable! I must show you something.'

He could not refuse; he came slowly towards her, shyly, with his cap off, and the sun on his curling hair.

'See!' she exclaimed gleefully; 'I have taught your baby something. It can even now enjoy Pat-a-cake Baker's man. You told me on the ship that it had not reached that pitch of education; I have carried her over the Rubicon.'

Cable smiled as he saw Josephine repeat the infantile

verses whilst she struck the baby's little palms. As the group was intent on the play, they heard a cough; and Josephine, looking round, was surprised to see her father in the garden. She coloured, rose up, and gave the baby to Mary.

'I have come to see you, Mr. Cable,' said Cornellis. 'I little supposed that I should find my daughter here. She ought to be at home; it is her practising hour on the piano; but her late escapade has unhinged her: she neither recognises what she ought to do, nor is aware where she ought not to go.'

'How did you come here, papa?' asked Josephine, not at all abashed.

'I came by the door of the house. Mrs. Cable told me I should find her son in the garden; she did not tell me I would find you here.'

'She did not know. I came over the dike.'

'It is indifferent to me how you came; I shall take good care to see you back,' he said coldly. 'I am here to speak not to you, but to Mr. Cable.' He turned to Richard, who looked at him with a puzzled expression.

'You were good enough to save Miss Cornellis from drowning,' said the gentleman stiffly, with a cold face. 'I have felt it my duty to come here to offer you a small gratuity—acknowledgment, I mean, for your services. I cannot in conscience allow your act to pass unrewarded.'

Cable became very red.

Josephine looked sharply at him.

'I expect no acknowledgment,' said the sailor curtly.

'You may not expect it; but that will not prevent your accepting it—a ten-pound note.'

Cable put his hand behind him. 'I will receive nothing, sir,' he said. 'What I did for Miss Josephine was my duty. I would do it for any one. I refuse an acknowledgment. I am paid already, over and over, by Miss Josephine's visit to-day.'

'That is right,' said Josephine, with a flash out of her brown eyes. 'I knew you would refuse.'

'Of course I do. I would do anything in the world for you, if you were in any danger, in any trouble; you know that, I hope?'

'I am sure of it,' said the girl.

Cable was agitated, partly with anger at the proposal of the father, partly with exultation at the daughter's recognition of his readiness to serve her unrewarded.

'Papa,' said Josephine, with a wicked light in her eyes and her lips twitching maliciously, 'if you are really grateful to Dicky Cable and wish to please him, not humiliate him, shall I tell you what to do?'

'What?' he asked, frowning.

'Play Pat-a-cake with the baby.' She stooped, caught up little Bessie, gave her a kiss, and held the child towards her father.

Mr. Cornellis turned sharply away. 'How can you be so inconsiderate, so foolish, Josephine! Come home instantly with me.'

From behind the sloe hedge sounded a cackling laugh; but though Cornellis heard it, he gave it no heed.

As he left the cottage with Josephine, he turned to her with an ugly expression on his mouth, and said: 'You are a fool. Do you not know what you are exposing yourself to? Do you not think that people will talk?'

'Talk—talk about what?'

'I say you are a fool. I've heard sneers already—about you and that lout.'

'What lout?'

'Richard Cable.'

'Dicky? I do not care.'

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE TERRACE.

Josephine lived in a condition of feud with her father. In her heart she repented of her rebelliousness; but when present with him, the antagonism broke out again, in spite of good intentions. She had naturally a good heart, truthful character, and abhorrence of meanness, but met at every turn with evidences of her father's insincerity and self-seeking. This condition of warfare had embittered her heart and sharpened her tongue.

We begin life as believers, and end it as sceptics. We begin with trustfulness, and go on through every stage of disillusion into absolute mistrust. As children, we look up to every one; as old men we look down on all. We expect this

process to take place within us: to find out one subterfuge after another, to discover hollowness wherever we tap, and dust behind every rind; and we are pleased at the ingenuousness of the young, who believe all things to be solid and the rind to cover richness.

Josephine was brought up in an atmosphere so clear that no illusion was possible in it. Her father's conversation dispelled all faith in what is good and noble and real. His example was level with his opinion. He made no scruple to let his sister and daughter see the strings that controlled his movements, the hollowness of all his profession. Instead, therefore, of beginning life as a child with belief, she began with suspicion and distrust.

She was drawn to Richard Cable and his household by the contrast he and it exhibited to her father and her own home. She stepped at once from the scenery of a theatre to natural landscape, from a hothouse to breezy open air. And as that which is true and wholesome always exercises attraction on a nature not wholly depraved, Josephine woke to consciousness of many fibres in her soul linking her to the Cable family, and to acknowledge a fascination which she could not explain.

Her father did not forbid her to go to the cottage; perhaps he so completely disbelieved in her obedience, that he thought it useless to do so. Instead, he sneered and threw about insinuations which offended her, and stirred in her the spirit of opposition, which always slumbered in her heart, waiting to be aroused. His remarks about Cable were so unjust and ungenerous, that she resented them indignantly; their injustice spurred her sense of fairness into assertion. The perverse tactics of Justin Cornellis recoiled on himself. Had he forbidden Josephine to go to the cottage, she would have obeyed sullenly, and admitted in the end that he had ordered discreetly; but as he took the other course, she persisted in her visits against her better judgment.

Aunt Judith exercised neither authority nor influence on the wayward girl. She was a lazy woman, who believed in her brother's cleverness, and thrust all responsibilities upon his shoulders. So long as she was comfortable all was well. The profitable was always right, and success was the sanction of conduct however tortuous. She reflected, in this, the general opinion, took her tone from what prevails. We heap scorn on Mrs. Grundy when she shakes her head over the gentleman who has a good cellar, and his lady who gives

splendid balls; she is only listened to when she utters her doubts about the propriety of calling on that couple which drives a pony-chaise, and the grass-widow whose garden is too circumscribed for lawn-tennis. Those who have difficulty in making both ends meet have every one picking at their frayed edges; but those whose incomes are double-breasted are panoplied as in armour. When we reckon our income by hundreds, we scarce dare express an opinion; but when by thousands, we may calculate on our platitudes being regarded as words to be treasured. We return cold-shoulder to him who, when we drop in unexpectedly, gives us cold leg of mutton at dinner. A surgeon must put his groom in livery and drive a dashing turn-out before he receives a fee. If he walks to see his patients, no one will give a fig for his opinion. I know a banker who stopped a run and averted ruin by putting his footman into red velvet breeches: no one supposed that the bank was tottering, when Jeames assumed new carnation inexpressibles.

'I wish, Josephine,' said Mr. Cornellis, 'you would run across to the Hall and learn what has become of Mr. Gotham. I have not seen him these three days. He has not been here; and when I went to inquire, he was not visible; stupefied with opium, I suppose. Tell him that I will come over and have a game of billiards with him if he be so inclined. Throw in a word about Aunt Judith,' he added, with a scornful laugh.

'Yes and no, papa,' answered Josephine. 'I will go, and I will say nothing about my aunt.' She took her hat and went to the Hall.

Mr. Gotham was in his garden, on the terrace, and the servant guided her to him. 'I have had the geraniums bedded out,' he said. 'I like to look on. Do you see how my roses are coming out?'

'Shall I tell papa you do not care for billiards to-day?' asked Josephine, who was impatient to be gone.

'I do not know; I will consider. Stay a while, and talk to me. That will be better than billiards. I am a little easier to-day, and am enjoying the sun.—These are very lovely grounds, are they not, dear Josephine?'

'Very lovely.'

'Hardly any one sees them. It will not do for me to allow people the run of them; they would pull off the branches, pluck the flowers, and trample the grass. Yet, I suppose, if

I am going to stand for the county, I must do this, allow a free day for the public, and keep indoors all that day as a prisoner. I do not mind your walking here whenever you like.'

'Thank you, Cousin Gotham.'

'It has occurred to me,' he said in a shy manner, twitching his head from side to side, 'that those children I saw you with the other day might like to see the grounds. Who were they? What were their names?'

'Oh, the seven little daughters of Richard Cable, the lightshipman.'

'They are pretty children. I peeped through the hedge as I was passing, and saw you surrounded by them.'

'I thought I saw you peeping before I went into the garden.'

'I peeped twice—once before, once after. In fact, I heard the chatter of little voices, and saw something shining under the leaves and thorn-boughs: and could not make out what it was, till I stooped, and then I saw it was the golden hair of little children sitting on the bank. Afterwards, I heard you singing to them, and I peeped again. You like them, I presume. What are their names?

'Cable.'

'I mean their Christian names.'

'Mary and Effie and Jane, Martha, Lettice, Susan, and Bessie. I think that is the order, but am not sure. Effie and Jane are twins.'

'Bessie—Bessie Cable,' murmured the old man, and he rubbed one trembling hand over the other. 'I wonder why she is called Bessie?'

'After her grandmother.'

'Has she dark hair and dark eyes like—like her?'

'No. All the children are fair, very fair. They remind me of a group of cherubs' faces by Sir Joshua Reynolds.'

'It is strange to find such beauty among persons so low in life,' said Gabriel Gotham.—'Sit down, Josephine, on this garden seat by me—sit and talk. I enjoy the sun; it does my neuralgia good, now that the wind is less cold and without east in it. I suppose that these children take after their father?'

'I never saw their mother. You know she is dead.'

'I know!—I know nothing whatever about them. Is she dead? Oh, I did hear about it. She was a maid at the

rectory, I fancy. Richard might have looked higher. He is a handsome man. He is not like his mother.'

'She is a very fine old woman, so stately, with a grand way about her. I think Mr. Cable derives something in his manner and his reserved way from her; but she is dark, and he is fair. Did you ever know his father?'

'His father!' Mr. Gotham started.

'There is some mystery about him. Richard Cable says he never saw him; he deserted Mrs. Cable when he, Richard, was an infant.'

Mr. Gotham fidgeted. 'You see those little children occasionally,' he said evasively. 'Perhaps it would please them to come into these grounds. I—I will have the wicket on the sea-wall open, and you can bring them in some day, and take them about; and if they like to pick any of the syringa, or laburnum, or rhododendron, I shall not mind. It would be pretty—would it not—to put the laburnum chains about their little gold heads?'

'No doubt it would please them.'

'You will not say anything about this to Mrs. Cable; she might object. Take them out for a stroll on the shore, and you will find the gate unlocked. Give a push, and it will open; then bring them in. I shall not be in the garden; I shall know nothing about their being here. No precedent will be established. But say nothing to Mrs. Cable.'

'Why not? She would have no objections.'

'I do not know; she would think it an intrusion. She might fear the children would do damage, and forbid it. I had rather you said nothing to her either before or after.'

'I will do as you wish.'

'When? This afternoon?'

'No; to-morrow.'

'I—I think there are some empty nests in the Banksian rose trailed against the terrace wall. If you look in, or hold up the little ones to peep in, they may perhaps find eggs there—pink and white, almond and sugar. That would please them—make them laugh, eh?'

'I am sure it would.'

'I shall not be here; I shall be in my room. I shall perhaps hear them laugh, and it will divert me, especially if I am in pain at the time. But I shall not appear, my green jalousies will be down. If I appeared, I might seem to sanction the intrusion, and there is no knowing where invasion

would stop. I should have all the parish coming here to pull up my bulbs, and pluck my roses, and break the statues and vases. I do not like the public; it is boisterous, and leaves traces where it romps of sandwich papers and empty ginger-beer bottles. When grounds are thrown open to it, the public is noisy, and I cannot bear noise. I suffer acutely in my nerves. There is a long nerve extending from the temple to the foot—— But there; I will not speak of that. It begins to twitch and shoot the moment I allude to it. Richard Cable is a fine man, a handsome man.—Look at this standard rose, Josephine. Do you know what it is? General Jacqueminot, a hybrid perennial. It is a superb rose. Do you know on what it grows? On wild-brier stock. It is budded. Below the bud, the root, the stem, are all wild, vulgar, hedge dog-rose. I should think Richard Cable was a budded rose; we know the stock is common, but—consider! What a man the father must have been, to have such a tall, stalwart, handsome son! You do not know Greek, Josephine, or you would understand what I mean when I say *anax andrón*—a king of men.'

'I daresay. It is a pity his father does not see him. Cable is a man to be proud of; he is not only a fine man, but he is a true and good man.'

'The children are pretty children, are they not? Like Reynolds's angels, you said.

'They are very pretty, unusually pretty children.'

'They do not take after their grandmother; Mrs. Cable is dark.'

'But perhaps their mother was fair.'

'Oh, their mother was nothing, a very common sort of creature. If they do not take after their grandmother, it must be after their grandfather. He must have been possessed of great personal beauty when he was young.'

To this Josephine made no reply; she was not interested in the question as to the appearance of the unknown grandfather.

'There is, I hear, a good deal of high quality, self-respect, and sterling goodness in Richard Cable.'

'He is a thorough man.'

'He could not have had that from his mother, who is only a common woman.'

'Why not? She is a superior person. I like her; she is so dignified.'

'He has not her eyes and hair. Rely on it, he draws also his moral and mental qualities from the other side. What a man that father must have been!'

'I do not think it or he would not have deserted him.'

Mr. Gotham kicked the gravel about with his toes, first with one foot, then with the other, and worked a hole with his stick among the shingle that covered the terrace.

'What does your father think of Richard Cable?' he asked at length.

'Papa! Oh, he calls him a lout and a booby.'

'He does not like him?'

'No—he has taken a prejudice against him; why, I cannot tell.'

'I suppose he has done something to testify to Richard Cable his gratitude for the services he rendered you?'

'He offered him a ten-pound note, and Richard refused it, I am glad to say.'

'You are glad. Why?

'Because papa should have given him either a great deal, or nothing at all.'

'Cable deserves something for his goodness to you, his care and his kindness.'

'He deserves a great deal; but he is too proud—too much of a gentleman at heart, to accept anything, offered as my father offered it.'

Mr. Gotham considered a while, still working a hole in the ground with the end of his stick. He looked slyly out of the corners of his eyes at Josephine, and then down at the burrow he was making. 'It is no concern of mine,' said he after a while. 'But for the sake of something to talk about, we will pursue the subject. I suppose Cable has his ambitions. What is he going to do now? Go on with his duties as lightshipman, or take to some other line of life?'

'Nothing else offers. The ship will be replaced; I suppose a better one than that old cut-down tub. But I fancy Richard would rather take to something which did not withdraw him so much from home. I heard him one day say that if he only had a boat of his own, he would be a fisherman.'

'Why should he not have a boat?'

'He cannot afford one. Boats are expensive.'

'Why should not you give him one?'

'I!' Josephine almost started to her feet, she was so astonished at the proposition.

'Yes, you. Why not? He saved your life. You feel indebted to him. Give him what would make him happy. Do not ask him if he will have it and give him opportunity of declining; make it his.'

'But, Mr. Gotham'—her handsome face was flushed as she turned it to him—'how can I? I have no money—that is to say, of course I shall have my mother's money some day; but my father is trustee, and my guardian, and would not let me have the sum for the purpose. Nothing would please me better than to give this surprise and gratification to a kind, good man. But it is not of any use proposing it to my father; he would not hear of it; he would cover me with ridicule, jeer at the suggestion, and dismiss it.'

'But I suppose that, when of age, you can claim your money to do with it what you will?'

'I do not know. I am of age next month; but it does not follow that I shall get my money if I ask for it. I am not going to have a lawsuit with my father for it.'

'I will make a suggestion, Josephine,' said the old man, still working his stick, and working it faster. 'I have money at my disposal which I am ready to lend you for this purpose. You shall borrow it of me, giving me an acknowledgment, and you shall buy Richard a ship. There is a new and beautiful little cutter being built by Messrs. Grimes and Newbold. She is very nearly ready for sea. What do you say to buying her and fitting her up with everything necessary, and presenting her to Richard Cable?'

'My father will never allow it.' Josephine's face was burning, her dark eyes sparkling.

'Do not say a word about it to him. The arrangement is between you and me. I think with you that some fitting acknowledgment should be made to Richard. He was right to refuse ten pounds. The world will cry shame on your father and you unless something be done for your preserver. Do not bring me in. I lend you the money; I do nothing more. I am ignorant of the purpose for which you borrow it—it is a business transaction.'

'But——' Josephine hesitated. She was pleased with the idea, yet something in her cautioned her not to close with the proposal. 'But, Mr. Gotham'—she coloured deeply—'will not people consider it odd? Will it not give occasion to talk?'

'People will suppose your father has in this way recom-

pensed Cable. They need not know that he has nothing to do with it, any more than they need know that I have helped in the matter. The talk will be that Mr. Justin Cornellis has done the right thing, and done it handsomely. Do not let it get wind that he offered ten pounds; that would make talk, and talk not pleasant to hear. Folk would say he valued you cheaply. You shall buy the boat of Messrs. Grimes and Newbold, and name her.'

'What shall she be named—the Bessie?'

'The Bessie!' Mr. Gotham shrank back. 'No—on no account—the Josephine.'

CHAPTER X.

JACOB'S LADDER.

'You have been a long time at the Hall,' said Mr. Cornellis, when his daughter returned with a heightened colour.

'Have I? I did not know I had been absent any considerable time.'

'The hour and a half must have passed very agreeably. You do not usually find the society of that old imbecile entertaining; nor he yours sufficiently pleasant to make him care to detain you. Perhaps,' he added with a sneer, 'you have been elsewhere.'

'I have not been elsewhere, papa.'

'And pray, what has kept you all this while?'

'We have been talking.'

'Does he want me to play billiards with him?'

Josephine considered a moment, then laughed, and said: 'Really, papa, I do not know. I forget. If he told me, I do not remember.'

'Your conversation must have been mightily engrossing if you cannot recall an answer to a message. What was it about?'

'You desire me to tell you?'

'O no,' answered Mr. Cornellis in his cold, contemptuous tone. 'If I were to insist, and you were indisposed to comply, you would tell me lies.'

Josephine's cheeks flushed. She had some difficulty in

controlling herself sufficiently to say in a subdued tone: 'Do I generally tell you lies, papa?'

'I do not know. I do not care to inquire. I daresay you do, when asked inconvenient questions.'

Josephine walked up and down the room. 'Why, papa, do you always imagine evil of me, and—of every one? It is enough to make one bad. Is the world full of nothing but swindlers and liars and hypocrites?'

'Angels do not tenant earth here.'

'Nor devils either.'

'Perhaps not—a generation which is a mixture of both; but the gravitation is downwards. Did you ever hear of any one flying off into angel-tenanted space? No, my dear; we keep our feet planted on the earth, and are insensible to centrifugal action, but alive to that which is centripetal.'

'Papa, do you remember that man on the pier at Walton with an apparatus by means of which he pretended he could see through a brick?'

'What of that?'

'He did nothing of the sort. You explained it as an optical deception, contrived by a series of mirrors hid in the apparatus. Those who peered through the spyglass thought they saw through a brick, but they did nothing of the kind.'

'Right: it was a deception.'

'Well, I believe you are equally deceived when you assert that you see through every one you come across.'

Mr. Cornellis bit his lip. He turned testily to his daughter and said: 'You need not pace the room as if you were still striding the deck of the lightship.'

She desisted at once, and left the room. She went out of the house, through the garden gate, upon the seawall, and walked there. The tide was out; a wide expanse of mud showed, and the mud exhaled its usual unsavoury steam. Gulls made a clatter over it, collecting food; a heron rushed up and flew away as Josephine approached where it fed. The tears were in her eyes. She was hurt by her father's remark that she would answer him with lies. She knew his ways of thinking and speaking; she had rebelled occasionally heretofore; her conscience had acquired fresh sensitiveness of late, and she shook off his ugly scepticism, as false to human nature. She had seen a true man, had met with genuine unselfish love, and had felt the charm it exercised. She began to suspect that there was a poetry and picturesque-

ness and music in the moral sphere as well as in mere external nature. She had been taught by her father, or had gathered from his conversation, scorn for the weaknesses of humanity, and now, with genuine surprise, perceived that there was infinite pathos and beauty in those very weaknesses.

The willows were quivering in the light wind, the leaves slenderly attached to the stem fluttered and flickered with a breath—their vibration exposed their silver lining. At one moment the trees stood dark against the sky, then a feeble puff sweeping over the mud-flat, brushed up the leaves, and converted the whole tree into a tree of snow exquisitely beautiful, a very tree for fairyland. Josephine did not walk up and down the seawall, lest she should seem to be pacing a deck; she felt in her heart her father's sneer. Accordingly, instead of pacing to and fro, she walked along it, and came, unintentionally, to the willows and the dike, and looked into Cable's garden. Thence she heard children's voices. She went to the bridge, crossed the water, and entered the garden. She was drawn on by an invincible attraction. She saw a ladder set against the side of the house, a short ladder, for the cottage was but one story high, and Richard Cable was above the ladder on the roof, pruning the vine. He had his foot on the topmost rung, but rested his body on the trellis; and as he lopped off a young shoot with leaves and tendrils, he stooped with it to his little Mary, who sat just below her father's foot on a lower bar; and she stooped and handed the cluster of leaves to Effie, who sat a stage lower; Effie handed it to her twin-sister, and Jane to Martha, and she to Lettice, and Lettice to Susie, and at the bottom sat Mrs. Cable with the baby, and insisted on the tiny hands receiving the cool beautiful leaves from the little sister. The pretty children were thus on steps of the ladder one above the other, with the evening sun on their shining golden heads and white pinafores, and their smiling faces and dancing blue eyes.

Presently, Cable called for some tying bast, and the baby was made to hold it to Susie, who received it and raised her arms over her head, when Lettice bowed and took the bast and passed it in like manner above her head to Martha, who in similar style delivered the bast to Jane, and so to Effie, and Effie likewise to Mary, and Mary to her father. The children were seated as masons on a ladder, when loading a scaffold.

Josephine stood where she had crossed, looking at the

picture. It strangely moved her, it was so beautiful a picture of peaceful happiness. She did not know whether she had been observed. She hoped that she had been unobserved, and drew back. She would not break the happy chain, disturb the simple pleasure, by her appearance. She went back over the plank to the further side of the moat, where were the willows, and walked on.

She felt very lonely, more so, after having witnessed this simple domestic interlude, than before. She thought of her father. What would have been his remark on what she had witnessed? The thought of him took the poetry out of the scene. She seated herself on the wall, built of chalk blocks brought from Kent by sea. Southernwood sprouted from the chinks, and fescue-grass; and sea-lettuce, now vividly green, pushed up its juicy fronds. She pulled some blades of grass and bit the wiry stems. She contrasted her life with that of Cable. His was direct, real, and transparent. Hers was twisted, artificial, and clouded. There was not a spark of sincerity in it. Her whole course of education had been directed towards making her false. She had been taught accomplishments, not because, in music, in history, in knowledge generally, there was anything worth pursuit, but because it was necessary for her to be acquainted with sufficient to fill her place in conversation without exposing ignorance. She took a sprig of white southernwood between her hands and rubbed it, and was suffused with the strong odour from the bruised leaves.

The tide was running in along a channel between the sea-wall and the mudbanks, sweeping along with it fragments of sea-tangle, little green crabs, and various small shells. She pulled off her stockings and shoes and put her foot down into the running fresh water. She still bit the fescue-grass, musingly, looking into the tide as it curled about her delicate foot. It was a pleasure to be alone, and free to do as she liked; to sit, if she chose, with one foot in the water instead of two. She was startled to hear a step behind her. She looked round, pulled the grass out of her mouth, and drew up her foot.

Richard Cable was there. 'Miss Cornellis, I saw you pass our gate. As you did not come to us, I have come to you.'

'O Mr. Cable!'—she always called him Mr. to his face, only 'Dicky' when speaking of him to her father—'I did not like to interrupt you whilst you were pruning your vine.'

'I was giving my pets a lesson,' he said.

'A lesson! Of what sort?'

'A double lesson—to take their several seats and sit there content; and to form a part of the great chain of life, each assisting and assisted by the other.'

'What!' exclaimed Josephine, with a tinge of her father's sarcasm in her tone. 'Delivering a moral lecture to the infants!'

'No,' he answered.—'May I stay here a moment by you, miss? I said nothing to them. They take in these ideas naturally. Did you see how they were all of them, dear mites! on the ladder, and me at top, passing things up and down? It is not necessary for me to give a lecture on it. They couldn't understand it now if I did; but afterwards, when each takes her place in the social scale, she'll maybe remember how she sat on the ladder, and will pass good things down to those below, and also hand up what is due to those above. It is a picture of life, miss.'

'You are a moralist, Mr. Cable.'

'I don't know that, Miss Cornellis; but I have time to think aboard my ship, and turn things about in my head, and so I see much that escapes others who are in active work and have no leisure for considering. In autumn, when the grapes are ripe, I shall be on the trellis again, and all the children on the ladder. Then I shall pass down the bunches; and the first bunch Mary will deliver to Effie, and Effie to Jane, and so down to baby, and not one of them will touch a grape. Then the next will go down like to Susie, untasted by all those above, and the third to Lettice, and the fourth to Martha, and the seventh and last to Mary. I need not give a word of teaching about it; they learn of themselves that the strong and the older, and those high up, must stoop to help the weak and the young and the lowly. It comes of itself, without words.'

'I do not know that your picture is a true parable,' said Josephine rather bitterly. 'I think that on the ladder of life we are all plundering the grapes and upsetting each other, to secure our seats and the first touch of the clusters.'

'The children will not do that; they see their father above them.' Then Richard Cable said in a lower tone, with great gentleness in his voice: 'Excuse me, Miss Cornellis; I came to you now because, whilst I was up the ladder about the vine, I saw at one moment all the seven pairs of blue eyes looking up to me—and then I thought of something you had said

aboard the stranded boat, and I came down after you to tell you about it, for what you said troubled me.'

'What was that?' asked Josephine.

'Do you remember saying that you had no trust, no faith; nothing and no one to look up to?'

'I may have said it. I do not remember.'

'I do. It hurt me to think it was possible; and when I saw all the little eyes on the ladder looking up to their father —I thought of a pair of brown eyes that were not uplifted. Excuse me, miss.' He stood up, and without another word walked away along the seawall.

Then Josephine let down her foot again into the water and stirred it in the transparent stream, and thought. Her face was grave, and the muscles about her mouth worked, and every now and then twitched convulsively. She sat on till the tide, rising higher, drove her from where she sat; then she put on her stockings and shoes again, and walked slowly along the seawall homewards. As she passed the garden of the Cables she looked into it without stopping. The children, Richard, were no longer there. The shadows of the great willows fell athwart the garden, cool and gray. She went on to her own home, and in and to her own room. There she saw her jacket thrown on the bed; her soap, which after she had last washed her hands, had slipped off the marble top of her stand, lay on the floor where it had fallen. Her comb was on the pincushion, her brush in the window, one of her walking-boots on the hearthrug, the other on a chair. She was angry, and went to the bell to summon the maid and scold her for neglect. But it occurred to her, as she had her hand on the rope, that her father was expecting company to dinner. The household was not large, and the few servants were required to bestir themselves and make a show. Anne was cleaning the plate; she was parlour-maid, lady's-maid, and butler all in one. Anne must lay the cloth, have the silver and glass in excellent order, answer the door, dress the table with flowers, and bring in dinner. How could she also attend to Josephine's room?

'On the ladder, on occasion, we must stoop and help each other,' said Josephine, letting go the bell-pull, half pouting, half smiling, and bending to gather up the fallen piece of almond curd soap. 'I know what I will do—I will do more on the ladder. I will go down and arrange the flowers in the glasses for the table.'

Whilst she was thus engaged, her father came into the dining-room.

'Papa,' she said, 'will you, or shall I, decant the wine?'

'I will do it. We must not have the cheapest. The rector pretends to know good from bad; but he is an impostor. His son, who is in the army, may have a more cultivated taste, and detect rubbish, so we must have some decent wine for him.'

'Is any one else coming?'

'The rector's wife—that is all. I do not want a large party to-night. Dress becomingly, and show your best manners. When I bring out my inferior wines, you may wear what you like, and be rude. Behave yourself to-night; lay yourself out to please.'

'To please whom? The rector?'

'No; his son, Captain Sellwood.'

'And pray, papa, why should I make an effort to please him?'

'Because I always thought he admired you. He is heir to a good fortune; and it is important that you should not let him slip through your fingers.'

Josephine's brow reddened, and her eyes sparkled with an angry light.

Mr. Cornellis looked coldly at her, and said: 'Do not put on stage attitudes and attempt heroics. I have invited the family here solely on your account. If you do not provide for yourself, I will not provide for you.'

'I have no particular eagerness to fish for husbands; I have no taste for that sport.'

'It is high time, Josephine, that you should understand your position. I am nearly at the end of my means.'

'There is my mother's fortune,' said the girl with a shrug of the shoulder and a toss of her head.

'Dissipated, my dear.'

'How dissipated? It is mine.'

'I was left trustee with full power to expend what was necessary on your maintenance and education.'

'That has not exhausted it.'

'It matters not how it is gone—gone it is.'

'Then,' said Josephine bitterly, 'you misstated the situation, papa, by the use of a wrong possessive pronoun, when you said that you were nearly at the end of your means; you should have said you had come to the end of *my* means.'

'I am not going to excuse myself to you,' Mr. Cornellis said. 'Your education, dress, and caprices have cost much money. The little fortune your mother left——'

'Papa,' exclaimed Josephine, 'I always heard that my mother was well off.'

'Then you heard wrong. Her relations were displeased with her for marrying me, and she got nothing but what could not be kept from her. A good deal of that went before she died.'

'Not all—there is surely the principal.'

'The principal has been going like old stilton. There is not much left; and before it is known that you are portionless, you must secure a husband.'

'Under false pretences?'

'You would not blurt out to every one that we are on the eve of a financial collapse? I am not going to argue with you. A woman is usually keen-witted in such matters.' He left the room with quick steps to get the wine.

Josephine had been arranging white lilacs and forget-me-nots in a little opal glass vase. Her hand trembled so that she shook out the flowers, and they fell on the white cloth. She tried to pick them up and put them in, but could not do so; and as Anne then entered, she held out the flowers and vessel to the girl, and, with averted face, said: 'Finish doing this for me, Anne.' Then she ran upstairs. Her cheeks were burning, her eyes hot, her temples throbbing. She was angry as well as distressed. Her father had robbed her, and had acknowledged it with effrontery. Not only so, but he told her this coolly just as company were expected to dinner. She must bury her wrath and humiliation in her heart, and appear with a smiling face, affect a careless spirit, and use her efforts to entrap a man into an engagement, letting him believe her to be the mistress of a handsome fortune.

She leaned her elbows on the window-sill and looked over the garden out to sea. The tide was in, the bay was full of blue water. The sun had set, a still, sweet evening closed in the day. She saw a flight of white and brown winged fishing-boats coming in with the wind and tide. The sailors were returning to their homes with their spoils, to spend a quiet Sunday with their wives and children and parents; they were returning with light consciences; they had earned the bread for all the mouths that depended on them. It was otherwise in Rose Cottage. There, thought Josephine, the father, in-

stead of laying by for his child, has wasted her fortune, and then bids her go forth and fish for herself with the net of fraud.

Her chin rested in her hands; her brows were knit; her lips quivered. No tears came into her eyes. 'Was there ever,' she said, 'a more miserable, forlorn girl than I? What I said to Richard Cable is true. I have no one to whom I can look up. My ladder is lost in cloud.'

CHAPTER XI.

THE SELLWOODS.

Mr. Cornellis could make himself an agreeable host, and he took pains that evening to make it pass pleasantly to his guests. The rector was a florid man, a gentleman of good family, easy-going, generous, never harsh in judging anyone, perhaps too ready to make allowances for the shortcomings of his parishioners. He, like Mr. Cornellis, knew the weaknesses of human nature, but made a different use of his knowledge. When his gardener had been detected selling his pears and grapes to a fruiterer at Walton, he shrugged his shoulders and said it was human nature, lectured him, but did not dismiss him. When he heard that some of his Sunday-school teachers had got into moral scrapes, he said: 'It is human nature; we must find substitutes;' and when Mrs. Sellwood showed him lumps of alum in the bread, he laughed, and said: 'Millers and bakers are human beings!' and would not take away his custom. On Christmas Day, his clerk was tipsy, and put in his Amens wrong. 'After all,' said the rector, 'it is human nature to rejoice on this day: we will pass it over.'

His son, Captain Sellwood, was home from India, a handsome, ox-eyed man, with light hair, but dark eyelashes, a man with an inexpressive face and solemn inscrutable eyes. He was not a man of words. He sat listening to conversation, twiddling his moustache and sharpening it to needle-points, with his great gloomy eyes on the speakers, moving them from one to the other as they interchanged talk, but saying nothing himself. Some considered him stupid. This was

not the case ; he had plenty of intelligence, but he was not a talker. Ladies condescended to him, and tried to draw him out on the subject of India ; but though he could speak on Indian topics, he felt that he was condescended to when India was brought on the carpet, and he left India lying there.

He felt keenly his inability to sparkle in society ; the consciousness came on him in spasms. When such a spasm of consciousness came on, he uncrossed his legs and put the right leg over the left ; at the next spasm, he put the left leg over the right. Some people, as already said, declared that Captain Sellwood's silence arose from stupidity ; others said, from liver ; others, again—and these were in the right—that his father had talked him down. The rector was a ready man in conversation, and fond of hearing his own voice. At his own table he monopolised the conversation, and this had affected the captain when he was a boy, and had made of him a listener, not a speaker. He had a wondering admiration for light badinage and small joking, for he was wholly incompetent to attain to sportiveness.

Mr. Cornellis took in Mrs. Sellwood ; and the rector gave his arm to Aunt Judith ; therefore, Josephine fell to the captain. She screwed up her mouth. She was not pleased, both because he was a dull partner and she was not in a humour to talk ; but also, and chiefly, because she knew her father's intentions, and her spirit rose in rebellion against him and his schemes.

'It is with dining as with virtue,' said Mr. Cornellis. 'We should love eating as we love virtue, for its own sake, not for what it may advantage us.—You will have sauterne with your fish, captain—tell me your opinion of it. I flatter myself it is good.' Captain Sellwood bowed and said, 'Very nice,' but in such a toneless way that Cornellis was unable to discover what his real opinion was. Cornellis always made much of his wines, talked of their age, bouquet, and brand, as if he had a first-rate cellar ; whereas he had no cellar at all, only a cupboard in the coal-hole where he kept a few dozen, and got his wine in as he wanted it. But by talking about his wine, and telling stories concerning the way in which he picked up this lot and that lot at sales or from old friends, he had acquired the credit of being not only a connoisseur, but of giving first-rate wine at his table.

The sauterne on this occasion was good. It was not

always so; but this evening Cornellis did his utmost to catch the captain for his daughter, and did not withhold his best either in eating or in drinking. He used to say that Zriny, Ban of Croatia, when he went against the Turks, put purses full of gold under his belt, so that if he fell, the enemy might hold his body in esteem; thus would all the world esteem the man who put good dinners under his waistcoat. The rector and his son would hardly suspect their host to be on the verge of bankruptcy when he gave them so excellent a repast.

But the captain, though he liked a good dinner, was not a man to lay store by it, and, perhaps after the spiced dishes of India, he preferred plain English roast and boiled joints to any entremets, however delicate. He would have preferred a seat opposite Josephine, where he could have looked at her, instead of a place at her side, where he was obliged to talk to her. His observations came at intervals, and had no connection with each other. He said something about the weather, then was silent; and after ten minutes, asked Josephine if she painted now; when she said that she did not, he fidgeted with his napkin, wiped his moustache, listened to what his father and Miss Judith were talking about, and then inquired whether Josephine's aunt had been well during the preceding winter.

The jovial rector was in full flow of talk about parish matters. 'I've no right to be here,' he said; 'I ought to be in prison with hard labour for a month. Instead of improving my parishioners, I demoralise them. What do you think is my last experience? I parcelled out my glebe so that some of the labourers might have fields and keep cows. I thought it hard that they should not have something to supplement their earnings on the farm. I even lent a couple of them money to buy cows. John Harvey was one, and he has got a month for it now.'

'How so, rector?'

'Because he has been stealing mangold and turnips through the winter to feed his cow with, from Farmer Barons, with whom he worked. Barons thought his mangold was going, and so set a policeman to watch; then Harvey was caught. He argued that his cow must not starve, and that he had not the land or capital to till root-crops for her, and that I was to blame for letting him have the cow. He was once an honest man; I had converted him, with the best intentions, into a thief.'

'He is let off pretty easy,' said Aunt Judith.

'That is not all. The farmers who employed the other men that have cows have given them notice to leave their service, so they will be thrown out of situations and lay the blame on me.'

'Is it not usually the case,' said Josephine, 'that when we seek to do good we blunder into mischief? Therefore, it is best to let men go their own wretched way for themselves.'

Captain Sellwood turned and looked at the girl fixedly; his great eyes said nothing, but he wondered in his heart that one so young should speak with such want of feeling.

'I don't agree with you, Miss Josephine,' said the rector. 'It is human to err. We do not see things from all sides at once, and so we make mistakes. Some suffer; but we learn lessons, and correct our mistakes.'

'We should try our experiments on ourselves, not on others,' said Josephine. 'You have been practising on the peasant, and the result is that the peasant has to suffer, not you.'

'I beg your pardon; I suffer also. I shall not see back the twenty pounds I lent for the cow.'

'It seems to me that you good people are always making plans for the bettering of others, and all your plans when carried out aggravate the evil. Leave the poor and suffering alone, to work out their problems for themselves.'

The great ox eyes of the captain were again on Josephine, and they annoyed her. She was determined, if possible, to bring some life into them, so she said: 'I believe in living only for self. Every animal does it. Why not we? We involve ourselves in a tangle when we begin to consider others, and get no thanks for our pains. Let us all fight our own way, and slap each other in the face if he persists in encumbering our path. I want help from no one, and will give no help to any one.'

'My dear Josephine,' said her father in a tone of sad reproach, but with eyes that expressed anger, 'you are talking at random.'

'Not a bit. I have well considered the law of existence. That is my law, simple, straightforward and successful—like, yes, like the way of the sea-nettle in the tide.'

'I do not think, my dear,' said the rector, 'that it is a way that will draw after it a wake of love and light.'

'I speak what I think and feel,' said Josephine, disregard-

ing her father's warning glances, encouraged by perceiving some expression in the ox eyes of the captain, like a cat's-paw of wind in a quarry pool.

'No, my dear,' said the rector, with a cheery smile on his red face; 'I won't allow that you feel and think this, though you say it. Neither will I admit for a moment your likening yourself to a sea-nettle. To a cactus, if you choose -that has on it needles. A girl sometimes puts forth a bristle of sharp and piquant speeches; but it is not human nature, any more than it is cactus nature to produce only stings—the flower bursts out in the end, large, glorious, beautiful, and we forget all about the bristles as we stand over and admire the flower.'

Josephine went on maliciously: 'Mrs. Sellwood has been most kind to that boy Joe Cudmore.'

'Yes; he is crippled with rheumatism, and bedridden.'

'She has spent hours in the dirty cottage and the insufferable stuffiness of the sickroom teaching the boy to read.'

'Well—yes,' said the rector. 'It was so sad to see the poor fellow confined to his bed with nothing to relieve the tedium.'

'And—with what result?'

'He can read.'

'Exactly. I was in the cottage the other day. We wanted the mother to come and char for us, and I found him devouring the police intelligence. You have roused in him a hunger for criminal biography.'

'He reads his Bible too.'

'I saw his Bible; you gave him one, with red edges, and the edges stuck together. It had not been read. What chance has the story of Abraham against that of Rush who murdered a household? That boy longs to recover the use of his limbs that he may emulate the glorious deeds of burglars, or at least of pickpockets.'

'You paint things in extreme colours,' said the rector, a little discouraged.

'And the schools,' continued Josephine—'I know how enthusiastic you are about them. The education given there has unfitted all the young people for the work required of them, or has given them a distaste for it. The farmers complain that of the rising generation not one lad understands hedging; and their wives, that the girls will have nothing to do with milking cows and making butter.'

'I remember,' said the rector, in an apologetic tone—he was unable to deny that there was truth in Josephine's words—'I remember some years ago there was not a man or woman in my congregation who could use the Prayer-book and Hymnal.'

'And now,' said Josephine, 'that they can use them, they value them so little that the fires in the stove are lighted with the torn pages out of them; and the road between the school and church is scattered with dishevelled sacred literature.'

Then the captain said: 'Am I to understand that you think no attempt should be made to do any good to any one?'

'To any one except ourselves—yes,' answered Josephine.

'You would in India allow suttees to continue, and Juggernaut's car to roll on and crush bones for ever unobstructed?'

'Why not? Is not India becoming overpeopled, and the problem springing up, what is to be done with the overflow of population?'

'I think,' said Mr. Cornellis with suppressed wrath, 'I will ask you, rector, to return thanks.'

'No,' said the rector; 'I am not going to say grace on such a sentiment. My dear Miss Josephine, we must not shirk a duty because it opens the door to a problem. It is the very fact that we are meeting problems which duty insists on our solving, that gives a zest and purpose to life. We make our blunders—well, that is inevitable; it is human to err; and our sons profit by our experience and avoid our mistakes. A child makes pothooks before it draws straight lines, and strums discords before it finds the way to harmonies. We must set an ideal before us, and aim for that; we may go wrong ways to work, but with a right heart; that will excuse our errors. Now, I will say grace, if you like.'

When the ladies were in the drawing-room, Mrs. Sellwood took a low chair before the fire, and in two minutes was asleep. The rector's wife was an excellent woman, who rose every morning at five, made her own fire, did her accounts, read the lessons for the day, and gardened, before the maid-servants appeared. But it is not possible for the most energetic person to burn the candle at both ends with impunity, and she made up for her wakefulness in the morning by sleepiness at night, and invariably dozed off after dinner, wherever she was. This was so well known by her hosts

that she was generally allowed to go off quietly to sleep and have her nap before the gentlemen came from their wine.

Aunt Judith made no attempt to keep her guest awake; when she saw her nodding, she drew Josephine into the conservatory, and said: 'My dear, how came you to speak as you did at table? You frightened the captain, and shocked his father.'

'I am glad I produced some effect on the former, who seems to me to have inherited his mother's somnolence.'

'But, Josephine, you know that Captain Algernon Sellwood has long been your admirer, and you are doing your best to drive him away.'

'Let him go. I shall breathe freely when he withdraws his great dreamy eyes from me.'

'My dear niece, I must be serious with you. He is a man worth having; he will have about fifteen thousand a year on the death of his aunt, Miss Otterbourne. He is a fine man, and belongs to a family of position. You could not expect to do better than take him. I speak now as your aunt, full of interest in your welfare. I must remark that your extraordinary and repellent manner this evening is not one to attract him to your feet. You are trifling with your opportunities, and before you are aware, you will be left an old maid.'

'I do not care. An old maid can go her own way, and a married woman cannot.'

'No, my dear; an old maid cannot go her own way, unless she has a fortune at her disposal. Can I? I am helpless, bound to helplessness. I do not follow a husband; I have to follow your father. Remember, you have not a fortune. Your father has told you that misfortunes have fallen on us, and your money is gone. Have you made up your mind not to take Algernon Sellwood, if he offers?'

'I don't know; I have not thought about it.'

'Do not take the matter so lightly. I am seriously alarmed about you—so is your father. Sooner or later, we shall have to give up our establishment, and disappear into some smaller place, and cut our expenses down to a low figure. It is not pleasant to have to pinch and clip. What stands in your way? You have never shown yourself so perverse before. Upon my word, I believe your head has been turned ever since that unfortunate affair of the lightship and Cable.'

'Do not mention him,' said Josephine abruptly.

'Who? Algernon Sellwood?'

'No; the other, Richard Cable.'

'Why not?'

'Because when you do, I see what a man ought to be, and the captain pales into nothing before him. Whether Algernon Sellwood has brains and heart, I do not know; he is to me a doll that rolls its eyes, not a man with a soul.'

'For heaven's sake!' gasped poor Aunt Judith. 'What do you mean, Josephine? Gracious powers! you do not hint at such a preposterous folly as that——'

'As that, what? Speak out!'

'As that—— I really cannot speak it.'

'As that I have lost my heart to Richard Cable, the lightshipman, the widower, father of seven little children? No; I have not. Now, are you satisfied? I am not such a fool as you take me for.'

Aunt Judith drew a long breath. 'It would be impossible for you to marry beneath you—and to such a man!'

'Beneath me!—Above me. We are all being dragged down. It is my fate never to have one to whom I can look up, whom I can call my own.—There come the gentlemen.'

As she and Aunt Judith entered the drawing-room through the French window, Mrs. Sellwood woke up, was wide awake, and said: 'Yes—buttered eggs! I said so, Miss Cornellis—buttered eggs!'

'Been asleep, dear?' asked the rector, tapping his wife on the shoulder.

'No, Robert. I have been talking to Miss Cornellis about buttered eggs.'

'Not even closed your eyes?'

'I may have *closed* them to consider better, but I have *not* been asleep. I have been giving a receipt for buttered eggs.'

CHAPTER XII.

AN INDISCRETION.

When the guests were gone, Aunt Judith retired. She was sleepy. She had eaten a good dinner, and eaten heartily, and wanted her rest after it.

'You are going to bed?' said she in the door to her niece.

'Eventually,' answered Josephine. 'I must play some good music on the piano first, to dissipate the reminiscence of Strauss and Waldteufel I have been strumming.'

'Why did you not play good music?'

'Because good music is desecrated if played to those who don't listen, don't value it, and prefer what is bad.'

Aunt Judith yawned, said nothing in reply, and withdrew.

Josephine went to the window and threw it open. The room was warm and close. One window unfolded upon the garden; the other at right angles into the conservatory. She opened the garden window and stepped out to inhale the fresh air; then, fearful of catching cold, as the dew might be falling, and she had on a low dress, she went in again, and stood in the window, leaning against the side, looking out. She rested the elbow of her right arm in the palm of her left, and held her chin, with the forefinger extended on her cheek. She was in a pretty rose silk dress, with lace about the neck, and short sleeves. The hue suited her admirably; she had looked very pretty that evening, especially when her colour came and her eyes flashed with excitement during her passage of arms with the rector. In her hair was a sprig of azalea, now faded, Madame van Cruyzen, a crimson azalea; and another sprig was in her bosom.

Aunt Judith, a frugal woman, had extinguished all the lights in the drawing-room, except those on the piano, which she left because her niece wished to play, and a little lamp in the conservatory, which she forgot. This latter was placed among ferns, and was of red glass, so that it diffused a warm glow over the plants.

Josephine did not care to play from notes, so she blew out the candles before she went to the window. The moon was shining; just over the top of the palings at the bottom of the garden could be seen the sea, a quivering sheet of silver, under the moon; the evening was light, so light that there seemed no blackness in the shadows, only deep blue; the sky was blue, the trees blue, the bushes blue, the moonlight bluish. It may have been the contrast to the red light in the conservatory that gave Josephine this impression, the contrast of coolness of colour also to her own warm tints of dress.

She thought of Captain Sellwood. She had known him

as a child, before he went to India; and had seen him since, when he returned on leave. He had hung about her whenever he came home; she knew that he liked her, and yet he never got far in showing his liking. She remembered once making her father laugh by calling him the 'Morbid Fly.' She had meant that he clung about, was half asleep, a little troublesome and not very interesting. She had used the expression when she was much younger and did not know the meaning of words. She had intended to call him torpid. Ever after, he had gone in the house by the name of the Morbid Fly.

She knew that he was more gifted than he seemed. His fellow-officers spoke highly of him. He had done well in his examinations before going out, so that he could not be deficient in brain; but he was not an interesting man. As the Frenchman said of Truth: it is so precious, 'il faut la bien économiser;' so might Captain Sellwood have said of his wits; he husbanded them so jealously that many doubted if he possessed any. That he was an honourable man, Josephine could not doubt. The rector was so high-principled, and sound at core, that a son of his could hardly fail to inherit something of his good quality. On occasion, he had shown that there was energy in him, but only on occasion. All good qualities were in him, as heat and its correlative light are in a stick or a piece of lump-sugar—latent, only to be made manifest by friction. There are blaze and bang in a percussion cap, but they are developed only by a blow; and when not beaten, a percussion cap is an uninteresting object, deficient in self-assertion.

'Really,' said Josephine, 'I do not want a husband, who will be invaluable in emergencies, and a cypher at all other times. Besides, I am not so sure that he would do and say the right thing when roused. It is a weakness of such persons often to do just what is not apropos, and, like his mother, say buttered eggs, when no one is thinking about such things.'

She stepped to the piano and closed it; she would not play any more that night. It might disturb her father and aunt.

She would go out into the pavilion, a small summer-house in the garden, on raised ground that commanded a sea-view; in it she could sit, get cool, and perhaps sleepy. It was of no use her going to bed now; she was far too excited to sleep. Had she spoken her own opinions in her controversy with the

rector? She had no opinions. Her moral sense, her views of life, were inchoate. She had merely repeated what she had heard fall from her father, opinions which her mind received without consenting to them, or rejecting them. She had measured arms with the rector out of perversity, because she knew that her father wished her to gain the old parson's good opinion, and because she owed her father a grudge for having wasted her property. That she was cutting off her own nose to spite herself she was aware, but indifferent to the consequences. That she would meet with angry rebuke, and sneers worse to bear than rebuke, from her father, she also knew, and did not care. She was in that condition of soul most dangerous in a young person, a spiritual condition analogous to that of one who in a dark room has lost all his bearings, does not know where door or window or table or wardrobe is; who beats about with the hands, moves this way, then that, and at last goes forward desperately, knowing that a blow or a fall must ensue, and give the proper bearings of the room. Josephine's mind was in confusion; she hardly could distinguish between right and wrong, and she was perfectly incapable of judging what was her proper course.

She did not care about her fortune that was squandered, because she had made no scheme, built up no hopes on the future when she would be her own mistress. She had one passion—for music, and at one time she thought of going on the stage; so she would escape from home; but she doubted whether she had the perseverance to pass through the drudgery of apprenticeship for the opera; and it was to the opera she turned, with her musical ear and splendid voice.

There had been long simmering in her heart indignation against her father, and impatience with Aunt Judith; and now this boiled over. The baseness of her father had never seemed to her so odious as since she had made the acquaintance of Richard Cable, nor the supineness of her aunt less inexcusable. Her rebellious temper impelled her to no positive line of action; it made her disposed to quarrel with every one who came in her way, and oppose everything that was suggested to her. In nervous disorders the patient is irritable, and almost insufferable to his nurses; and Josephine was spiritually ill; her moral tissue was in a state of angry excitation. We are her nurses sitting round her, reading her mind, with our fingers on her pulse, counting its furious throbbing. We must

be patient with her, and not angry because she seems to us unreasonable. The moral sickness must be borne with as tenderly as the sickness that is physical. Have we not ourselves had our periods of ethical giddiness, when everything swam round us and the ground gave way under our feet? When we put out our hands grasping in vacuum we caught at things that could not stay us up.

Or to vary the simile somewhat, may we not consider our span of life as a tight-rope on which we have to dance our hour? We can do it with the balance-pole in our hands that we are supplied with—a balance-pole of some sort or another—moral principle or social etiquette. How we pirouette, and leap and fall and rebound, and trip and spin on tiptoe, with a smiling face! We have our pole. And what pranks we play with that same pole! Now we bear it horizontally, and then all the lookers-on know we are safe. Anon we balance it on our noses, and folding our arms across the breast caper a hornpipe; thereat every breath is held, for all expect our fall. Anon we toss the pole from hand to hand, and sway in our dancing precariously: a gasp from the spectators; we have cast our pole from us high into the air. We are lost! No; a somersault is turned on the rope, and the hands grasp the falling pole in time to steady us again. So we go along our rope to the end; and whether we carry our pole off it at the extremity depends on what the balancing-pole has been.

Some acrobats are sent along the rope without any pole at all to balance themselves as best they may with outstretched arms; and under some nets are spread, which may receive them if they fall; but to others are only the hard stones of the pavement and sharp flints. When these go down they never go aloft to dance again; they cause a talk for a day, and are then forgotten. The broken creatures lie all about us; they can be counted by the scores. We thank God we are not as they; we have our balancing-poles and our receiving-nets, and have not our spasms of supreme agony, when our feet totter, our heads whirl, and we know we are lost. Not we. We have social etiquette, which can never fail us, which will always restore our equilibrium, always remain in our hands and keep us upright; always, that is, till we reach the end of our cord, and then we throw it away for ever.

As Josephine sat in the summer-house she was quite in the dark. The house was of board, painted, with a conical roof, no window, only a side door. Through this door she looked

on the quivering silver belt of the sea. A cloud obscured the moon, but not the rays that fell on the sea, which gained in brilliancy by the obscuration of the moon. She knew that the tide was full. The hour was midnight, and when the tide was at noonday or night then were the highest tides at Hanford. She could hear the lap of the water on the seawall outside the garden palings—a cool, pleasant murmur that soothed her. Without thinking of what she was doing, moved by the sight of the glittering water and the sound of the tide, she began to sing the mermaid's air in *Oberon*. As she sung she thought she heard a sweet whistle repeating the air ; she stopped, and the whistle continued it. She flushed in the dark. Richard Cable was without, on the seawall, in the moonlight, watching the tide, by the garden gate. She sang another verse and stopped, and again the whistle echoed the strain.

Then she started up. 'What can have brought him here? He has been thinking about me! I have some crackers for his children; I put the box aside in the conservatory.' She did not stop to consider what she was about; she ran to the house, stepped into the little glass veranda and took the box. Then she also stooped and carefully raised the ruby-globed lamp, and went out into the garden with the box of gilt crackers in one hand and the ruby lamp in the other. She took the lamp partly that she might show Richard the pretty crackers by its light, as the moon was hidden; partly, also, out of a sense of vanity, because she wished him to see her in her rose silk evening dress, and artificial light was necessary to bring out its colour. Another, a third reason, also influenced her, as unacknowledged as her vanity; an instinctive sense of imprudence in going out of the garden gate at midnight to speak to a man, and a fancy that the bearing of a light would modify the imprudence.

Josephine for her trip along the rope of life had been given by her father no balancing-pole whatever, certainly no moral principle. She walked through the garden, softly singing the mermaid's song, bearing the coloured light; a pretty object, had there been anyone there to see her. The garden gate could be opened by the hand from the inside, but only by a latch-key from without. When she came to it she put the box of crackers under her chin, and held it thus whilst her disengaged hand drew back the latch. Then in a moment she stepped through, and with a merry laugh stood lamp in hand before Cable, and the door closed behind her unregarded. She

raised the lamp and let the rosy light fall over her face and hair and bare neck and shoulders.

The boatman took off his cap and stood as one dumbfounded, holding his cap to his breast with both hands, looking at her.

'Are you not surprised to see me, Mr. Cable?'

'Very—miss. I thought I saw a fairy, or a vision.'

'And I,' she said, smiling, 'I was surprised too. I sang and heard an echo. I came out to see whence the echo came, and found you. How came you here at this time of night?'

'Well, miss,' answered Cable, deferentially, 'I am up so much of nights when aboard the lightship, looking after my lamp; and now that I am ashore, I can't always sleep; and this being a beautiful night and the tide flowing full, I thought I'd walk on the wall. But, miss, excuse me, you ought not to be here.'

'Oh, I have only come to give you this box of gilt crackers—it will amuse the children. Each contains a trifle—a brooch, or a ring, or an anchor. How they will laugh over them!'

'Yes,' said Cable; 'but I had rather you had not brought them now.'

'I give you them; take them. I must go back.'

'Yes, miss, at once.'

She put her hand to the garden door; it was fast. 'O Mr. Cable!' she exclaimed, as her heart stood still.

'Hush!' He put his finger to his lip.

Both heard voices close at hand, on the seawall. The wall made a bend at the garden paling, so that those approaching from one direction were invisible. On the other side it extended straight forward for a mile.

The moon burst forth in a flood of light. Instinctively Cable and Josephine looked along the wall. No escape was possible in that direction. Seaward also was no escape; the tide was in and washed the base of the dike. The sailor put his foot against the door; it was too strong to be burst open.

Josephine blew out the light, and then was aware that it was useless for her to do this; she could not be hid. She stood in her evening dress, in the glare of full moon, against the painted, boarded wall, and Cable beside her, exposed to the sight of anyone turning the corner, without possibility of escape, without a place where she could hide.

Scarce a moment was afforded her to determine what to do, when round the angle came the rector and his son, arm in arm.

'My dear Algernon,' said Parson Sellwood, 'you need not be afraid; she is right at heart. It is human nature to be perverse.'

Then, all at once, the two gentlemen saw those before them.

'My dear Josephine!' exclaimed the rector. 'Good gracious! what is the meaning of this?'

Josephine looked down, and her voice faltered as she said: 'I came with crackers for the children, and the gate closed—and—and I asked Mr. Cable to take the crackers home to his little ones.'

'The gate fast?' asked the rector. 'Locked out on the wall at midnight. O Josephine!'

In a moment, the captain threw his overcoat that he had on his arm upon the spikes that incrusted the top of the palings, and laying both his hands on the coat, lifted himself over, and in another minute had opened the door.

'We are inconsiderate,' said Captain Sellwood; 'we must not keep Miss Cornellis standing here making explanations.'

'No,' said the rector, 'inventing explanations.' He clicked his tongue in his mouth. 'What a pity it is you have lost your mother. To a young girl nothing can replace a mother—no, not the best of aunts. Shut the gate. Come on, Algy.' He said nothing to Cable; but as he relinked his arm in that of his son, after a few paces in silence, he muttered: 'No; it won't do. I am sorry. There is good in the girl; but—it won't do, Algernon. Look elsewhere.'

CHAPTER XIII.

BURNT OUT.

Josephine staggered to the pavilion and threw herself on a bench in its shadow. She must get out of the moonlight, retire among the blackest of shadows to hide her humiliation. What had she done? What would the vicar and his son think

of her! What a talk in the place would spring out of this! She could never hold up her head again, never look anyone in the face. Was it possible that the story she had told would be received? Appearances were too strongly against her. For a moment the temptation came on her to open the gate again, run out, and throw herself into the sea.

What a fortunate thing for us if we could see the consequences of our acts before they took place. Then we should never wish to do, certainly never do, foolish things. Judgment comes late, after the act, as thunder follows lightning. We do not hear the growl till it is too late to recall the flash. Josephine was alive to her indiscretion, now that it was committed, and would have given half the fortune her father had cast away to have had it undone. She was angry with herself for her want of forethought; angry with the children for liking crackers; angry with the vicar for pottering along the wall after midnight; angry with Cable for not jumping over the fence; and with the captain for jumping over it. Cable ought to have had the readiness of wit, at the first sound of the voices, to have relieved her from the situation at the cost of his hands; the captain ought not to have gone over the paling, for by so doing he had let her see that he knew she was there clandestinely, and would be ashamed to go to the front door of the house to ask admission.

Everyone was in fault, but she most of all. She resolved never to speak to Richard Cable again. He was guilty of insolence in echoing her song. She would take no more notice of his odious brats. She would never attempt to do a good-natured act again. It was all good-nature which had precipitated her into this predicament.

She returned slowly to the house without the lamp; she had left that on the table in the summer-house; that could be fetched to-morrow. She entered the drawing-room and groped for her candle with the matches by it, usually put on a side-table. She would light her candle, then close the shutters, and exclude the moonlight. Her candle was indeed in the usual place, but not the box of lucifers. This was provoking, as she had none in her room; her box there, she remembered, was exhausted. She considered a moment, and resolved to go into the kitchen, or into the pantry, where she was sure to find what she required. She left the room with the window hasped, but not barricaded, and put off her thin shoes, so as to make no noise in the house, lest she should disturb and

alarm anyone. She had remained up much later than she had intended. Aunt Judith would be asleep, her father also, at this time.

When she softly opened the door into the hall, it struck her that the air was strongly impregnated with paraffin. A little light came in from the staircase window, and by that she was able to find her way to the pantry. She put down her candle on the hall table and went in, but stepped back at once. The floor was wet. Her feet were moistened; she had trodden in a pool of oil.

'How stupid—how like Anne! She has upset the can. I must not go in there for matches.'

She stepped towards the kitchen, very lightly, with inaudible tread. There she found fire still smouldering in the grate, and the oven door open, showing that it was filled with sticks. Moreover, there was wood on the hot-plate of the stove.

'How careless cook is! She is drying the kindlers for to-morrow, and has not raked out the fire first.'

She stooped to remove some of the wood which lay on the ground, and which she felt as she walked without her shoes; and again was conscious of the smell of petroleum. She was surprised; but then recalled that she had stepped in the slopped oil in the pantry, and concluded that she smelt what she had brought away with her. Then she put her hand on the mantel-shelf for the lucifers, and found the box. She had left her candlestick in the hall, so she returned to it in the dark, and was about to strike a light, when she thought she heard a sound as of some one stirring in the dining-room. She stood perfectly still, not daring to breathe, listening. Again, she heard the noise. There was certainly some one in the room. The first impulse was to cry; but she controlled herself, and considered what had better be done. The noise might proceed from a cat. She stepped very lightly to the door, which was ajar, touched it, and drove it open sufficiently to admit her, sidelong, and she looked in. The shutters, which had been fastened, were open, and the moonlight flowed into the room. Every trace of dinner had been cleared away from the table, which now had on its usual printed cover.

Josephine saw something, or—was it some one, on the floor, moving! The light through the French window was so clear that she was left in doubt only a moment. She saw a profile against the window-pane and recognised at once her

father. He was on his knees, and was creeping about with a can, the oil-can, in his hand. She saw him decanting it on the carpet near the window curtains. He was in his dress suit, as she had last seen him, saying good-bye to his guests.

'Papa,' she said, 'what are you about?'

He started to his feet with an exclamation, either of terror or of surprise.

Josephine stepped fully into the room. 'What is it, papa? Have you lost something?—or——What are you doing?'

He stood back, against the window curtain, and put his hands behind him, with the can. The moonlight was strong, and his position was against it, so that his black silhouette was sharp, as if cut out of lamp-blacked paper. She saw the movement of his lips, and his tongue shot out, like a serpent's, then drawn in again. He said nothing.

'Papa, there is a very strong odour of petroleum; have you spilled the oil?'

He replied in a suppressed voice, vibrating with anger: 'What are you doing here? Spying on me, are you?—Yes, I have spilled a little oil here.'

'But why have you brought the can in here?'

'Because,' he answered in the same tone, 'that fool Anne upset the gravy from the roast duck on the carpet, and I am trying to get the grease out.'

'Is not that better done by day, papa?'

'I know best when it is to be done; I must apply the oil before the grease is trodden in.'

'You have no light.'

'Am I a madman to take a candle when I am using paraffin?'

'True, papa; I did not think of that. There is a pool of the oil in the pantry. I suppose you spilled that. It would have been better, I think, to have left the extraction of the grease till to-morrow.'

'I know what I am about.' She knew by the quiver of his voice that he was angry. 'Get to bed with you, and do not meddle with me.'

She was too much afraid of her father to disobey him. She returned to the hall, struck a match, lit her candle, and then—to her surprise saw a heap of wood, and a number of old newspapers that her father filed in his study, cast beneath the stairs. What was the meaning of this? Why had her father brought his newspapers there, and why had he also

placed with them the sticks that had been cut and piled up for dahlia supports? She did not ask him; she went up the stairs to her own room, shut herself in, and undressed. Then the recollection of what had happened to herself returned, and displaced the thoughts of her father's strange proceedings.

When she was in bed, she could not sleep for some time, thinking of what had taken place, and blaming herself for her want of consideration. When at last she did fall into slumber, it was into a feverish, fantastic dream, in which she believed herself to be awake and struggling with sleep. She thought that she was arraigned before court for having stolen gilt crackers, and that her father wore a wig, and was counsel for the prosecution; and Richard Cable also wore a wig, and was counsel for the defence; and that the rector sat as judge; and under his seat was the captain, looking dreamily at her, with pen in hand, as clerk, waiting to take down the evidence for and against her. On the table stood the ruby lamp, and the entire court was irradiated by it. She was annoyed with the lamp because it diffused so red a glow that it made her look as if she were blushing. Besides, it diffused heat as well as light, and the air in the court became oppressive because of the lamp. Then she asked to have it turned down; and the captain put his hand to the screw and turned it up, so that the flame shot out at the top above the chimney, and the redness in the court seemed to deepen, and the heat to become more intense. The rector's gown, instead of being black, was scarlet, like the habit of a criminal court judge, and his face was as red as his gown. Then he raised his hand and pointed to Josephine, and said: 'She blushes; she convicts herself;' and she was conscious of being suffused with colour and shame and anger. She could endure no longer the heat and the glitter of the eyes turned on her in that red light, and she cried out and started up in bed, and in a moment was aware of a smell of fire, and of unusual heat, and of a crackling sound. She saw a light strike along her floor from under the door, and knew that the house was in flames. She sprang from bed, slipped on her clothes, and opened her door. Then she saw that the lower part of the staircase was in a blaze, that flames were pouring through the doors of the dining-room and the pantry, where the petroleum had been upset. To descend to the hall was impossible.

She ran to her aunt's door, opened it, roused Judith Cornellis, and then hastened to her father. His door was locked. She knocked long at it before he answered; then he was some time before he had lighted a candle, put on his dressing-gown and slippers, and unlocked.

'Papa,' she cried, 'do be quick; the house is in a blaze. We cannot go below. It is all flaming.'

'Indeed. How comes that about?'

'Papa, what is to be done?'

He smoothed his chin, and said: 'The gardener has been trimming the Ayrshire rose, and has left the ladder against the window on the landing. It is quite providential.'

She looked at him in surprise. He took the matter with singular coolness.

'Now,' he said, 'run and rouse the servants. If the back-stairs are on fire, we must all escape by the ladder.'

At the same moment a violent hammering at the front door and ringing of the bell were heard. The policeman in going his rounds had observed the fire, and had run up to rouse the house.

In a few minutes the whole of the inmates were awake, and had scrambled into their clothes, and were gathered at the head of the stairs.

'Quick!' said Mr. Cornellis.—'Josephine, Judith! save any of your trinkets and trifles. We must get out as quickly as we can.'

Then a spout of flame rushed up the stairs. The policeman and some one he had called to his aid had made their way in through the conservatory and drawing-room; and on opening the door, the air had fanned the fire into a blaze. Conscious of his mistake, the policeman hastily reclosed the door, went out, and ran round to the back kitchen. The flames were raging there also. The whole of the lower story, except the drawing-room and study, seemed to be on fire. It was extraordinary with what rapidity the conflagration had spread.

Mr. Cornellis retained his composure. Miss Judith would have remained collecting the treasures in her bedroom, had not he precipitated her movements by snatching her bundle from her and throwing it out of the window. Then he made her descend the ladder. All were speedily in safety on the grass in the garden, looking up at the burning house. Very little could be saved. A few pieces of furniture from the

drawing-room, some pictures of no value, bedding, and the contents of some wardrobes—that was all. The fire gained hold of the house rapidly; the floors of the bedrooms were hot, smouldering, the smoke thick; and there was no fire-engine nearer than nine miles off. Nevertheless, a rider was at once despatched for the engine, which arrived when too late to save anything, but not too late to spoil with the water such things as had been spared by the fire.

Mr. Cornellis flew about in his slippers and dressing-gown. He had not had time to dress himself completely. Indeed, no man could have been more taken by surprise; he had lost everything, except a pair of trousers, slippers, a figured Turkish yellow dressing-gown, and his shirt. He did not lose his presence of mind. Some place of refuge must be found for his sister and daughter. He considered a moment, and then ran to the Hall and knocked up Mr. Gotham, who, when brought to understand what had taken place, consented to receive the family under his roof. The servants of the Hall were roused; but, indeed, the whole village was awake and out, and the grounds of Rose Cottage and the road and seawall were crowded; the boatmen who appeared were prompt in their offers of assistance, and formed lines to pass buckets of water to the burning house, but desisted when they found that the pailfuls were unavailing; the fire had gained too great a hold on the house. The few goods that had been rescued were carried by them to the Hall, and then they drove their hands into their pockets and stood watching the progress of the flames.

The rector appeared without his hat. He caught sight of Josephine, grasped her wrist, and drew her aside. 'How comes this about?' he asked bluntly.

'The fire! Oh, Mr. Sellwood, how can I tell?'

'Eh? Is it the result of your night-wanderings? After what I saw, I am not surprised at any act of thoughtlessness. You had a lamp in your hand. What did you do with it?'

'It was extinguished. I left it in the summer-house.'

'This is not the result of your inconsiderateness? Eh?'

'No, Mr. Sellwood; indeed, it is not!'

'Then how came it about?'

'I do not know.'

'Is the house insured?'

'I do not know.'

'What are you going to do? Where are you going? You must not stay here.'

Then up came Mr. Cornellis in his dressing-gown.

'I say, Cornellis,' said the rector, 'this is a bad job. How did it come about?—But no; no questions now. We must put the ladies under shelter. Poor Miss Judith looks ready to die. My vicarage is at your disposal.'

'You are too kind, rector. But I cannot take the generous offer. Gotham has invited us to the Hall, and I have accepted. We are relatives.'

'O well. You would have been welcome. I fear this will be a sad loss to you.'

'When Providence——'

'Yes; exactly. Insured?'

'Fortunately, I am.'

'Got your policies? Or are they burnt?'

'They are at the bank.'

'Insured well?'

'Middling.'

'And the furniture?'

'Insured also.'

'The books?'

'Also.'

'And the plate?'

'Yes.'

'And the wine?'

'Yes.'

'Then—anything not insured?'

'Not my clothes, unfortunately.'

'I'm glad you were insured; the loss won't be ruinous.'

'The loss must be heavy, very heavy, almost crushing.'

'I'm glad you were insured.—Now, get the ladies under cover. They must not be out any longer. I hope you were heavily insured?'

'Middling.'

'Insured long?'

'Only a twelvemonth for furniture and wines, and books and plate. The house was insured directly I bought it.'

'For how much?'

'About its value.'

'And your cellar of wines—all your fortunate purchases. By Jove! you may recover their value, but not the wines.'

'That is what I feel. Then there are my oriental books.

my Hebrew Bible and Greek Testament, full of marginal notes. I can never replace them. But Providence——'

'Exactly,' interrupted the vicar. He had an abhorrence of cant, and whenever he suspected any one with whom he was in conversation lapsing into it, he cut him short, and in so doing, sometimes acted unjustly, interrupting expressions of real feeling. But he was a blunt and downright man. 'I'm sorry for you—I am, with all my heart. How came it about? But here is Gotham, looking out for you. The ladies must be taken under shelter. I am selfish detaining you. I am glad you are insured all round.'

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TANGLE.

The Cornellis family settled into the Hall, as if they had no intention of leaving it. At all events, neither Mr. Cornellis nor his sister bestirred themselves to find other quarters. Mr. Gotham did not care. So long as he was allowed to move about, and was flattered by Justin Cornellis, and was undisturbed in his study, he was content. Cornellis had made himself indispensable to him, and Gabriel clung to him. It was in his nature to cling, and just now his grapple of the ex-missionary was tenacious, and to another man would have been embarrassing. But Cornellis understood Gotham, or thought he did, and believed that by humouring his vanity and sloth, and by not standing in the way of his pleasures, he could twist him about to suit his own purposes. Mr. Gotham now did, what he had said he had done, execute a will in his favour, leaving him his entire estate; making him executor and residuary legatee as well; but he gave him his private instructions, which he had made the ex-missionary solemnly promise to execute. It was in keeping with the miserable vanity of the man that he could not endure the prospect that even after death his conduct should be known; that people should be able to point to Bessie as his wife, whom he had basely deserted, after having deceived her; and to Richard, the lighthouse man, the vulgar sailor, as his son. He was conscious that he had behaved dishonourably, and he

shrank from being found out, and having his cowardly action published, to be commented on by the world.

The destruction of Rose Cottage was complete. Nothing worth preservation remained. It had been cheaply built, the walls thin, and when the floors and roof fell in, the gray brick flanks collapsed as well. All that remained of it intact was the green boarded summer-house in the garden.

The agent of the insurance office came to Hanford and inspected the ruins. Mr. Cornellis showed him over the fallen walls, the charred beams, the trampled garden. He was frank. There had been a dinner-party that night. The servants had been hard-worked, and possibly there had been some neglect. Servants are careless. He confessed that he ought to have gone round the house that night after all had retired, and seen that the fires were extinguished and the house locked up. He had not done so, having a sick headache. His daughter had roused him about two o'clock – he could not tell the hour exactly, he had been too bewildered to look at his watch. When he came out on the stairhead, he saw that the staircase was on fire and flames rushing from the kitchen. He had spoken several times to the cook about putting the wood for the kindling of the fires in the oven and on the hot plate. He had forbidden it; but servants are not always obedient any more than they are prudent. As far as he was able to judge, the fire had originated in the kitchen, communicated with the pantry, where the paraffin oil was kept for the lamps, also a can of benzoline. When the oils had become ignited, such a volume of flame gushed forth that the stairs caught fire. This he suspected was the explanation of the conflagration; but he was in too great alarm and excitement when roused to take accurate observation; moreover, he had the women to look after and save. Every day, he felt more keenly his loss of a wife who would have kept the maids in order. A man cannot do that effectually, and a young girl like his daughter had not grown into the part of housekeeper. With great candour, he told the agent that it was after a disturbance with his maids relative to their reading novels in bed, and going to sleep with the benzoline light burning on the chair at the bed-head, close to the pillow, that he had doubled his insurance, and had taken the precaution to insure everything he possessed in the house.

The agent questioned the cook, who admitted having put the sticks into the oven and on the hot plate, because they

were damp and would not ignite. Anne could not remember whether she had left her cans of oil in the pantry or in the kitchen, whether they were corked or not. It was true that master had spoken to her about reading in bed a year ago, when she had set fire to and burnt a hole in the sheet by going to sleep leaving the lamp alight, and turning over in bed and upsetting the lamp.

The insurance was allowed. There was no reason why it should not be. Not the smallest suspicion was aroused that the fire was occasioned by any other cause than the carelessness of the cook, who received her dismissal and a lecture on disobedience. Mr. Cornellis refused her a month's wage on the grounds of her having set fire to the house, and the woman was so concerned that it had been burnt down through her inadvertence, that she made no demur to the loss of wage.

Josephine was not present at the visit of the agent, but she heard about it, and heard the origin of the fire discussed. It was discussed by her father at table. She was uneasy. Not a word was said about his having been up and about after midnight. Only when she found that all the blame was laid on the cook and Anne, did she interfere, and then she spoke to her father when they were alone.

'Papa, why is not a word said about your cleaning up the gravy with petroleum? If Anne did leave the can in the kitchen, you must know, as you used it in the dining-room. The oil was spilled in the pantry—there was quite a pond there. I trod in it.'

'Was there a pond in the pantry? Then the can leaked.'

'But you had the can, papa.'

'I had not. I employed turpentine. I did not go near the pantry.'

Josephine was not satisfied. She could not tell her father that she disbelieved what he said; she mistrusted him. When she heard the rector and Mr. Gotham lament the loss of his wines, she opened her eyes. He had no wines—a few dozen only in the coal-hole cupboard; he had no cellar.

The fire had this effect, that it drew her mind away from the consideration of her own trouble. She knew it might also distract the rector, and thought that he would make no further allusion to it. But in this she was mistaken. He called at the Hall a few days after the fire, and as she was in the garden, went to her, and took her hand in his, in his kindly, fatherly way. 'I have a crow to pluck with you,

Josephine. I have left the crow unpicked for some while, but he has been put aside, not buried.'

She knew at once what he meant, and coloured, and sharply withdrew her hand. If she had trusted him and told him the truth, he would have been satisfied. The rector was easily satisfied, because his heart went out to meet every one who had done wrong and frankly acknowledged the fault. But she took another course, a mistaken one, a course she would not have taken had she been in a condition to judge calmly. Her father's conduct on the night of the fire had been so suspicious, that she was unhappy and uncomfortable, thinking him guilty of a great act of dishonesty, and this made her peevish and jealous of interference. She dare not say what she thought; she dreaded lest her suspicions should betray themselves, were her confidence gained by the vicar. So she armed herself with reserve, bound her heart about with pride, and met his advance without cordiality.

'My dear Josephine,' he said, 'I am not satisfied about two matters—your being on the seawall at midnight, and the fire following so soon after. I cannot shake out of my mind the thought that the two incidents are connected.'

'I told you, rector, that they were not, when you made the same remark on the morning of the fire.'

'It is strange. You were the last person up.'

'Is it necessary for me to repeat the assertion, Mr. Sellwood? I have already said that there is no connection between the two events.'

He shook his head. He disliked her tone. He looked in her face; he was displeased with the expression there. 'I see, I see, it is of no use my speaking to you. You are in an obstinate, defiant mood. I only sought your good.'

'You sought the good of the labourers when you gave them cows, and you landed them in jail.'

'Only one—only one. It is my duty to try to do good, though, God knows, I make sad bungles in doing it. I must follow my nose, though it leads me to flounder in a bog. I can do no other.—All I wanted to say, Josephine, was, that if you had thrown down a match, or upset a lamp, or left a candle burning, so that the fire broke out, it is your duty to mention it. You were up after every one else was in bed. Have you told your father that? If the fire came from the kitchen, you would have smelt burning wood when you went

into the hall. Not more than two hours after you retired, the house was in a blaze. Have you told your father you were up?'

'No.' She looked down. She could not say that he knew it, lest the rector should ask further questions.

'Then tell him.—Look here, Josephine. Follow, as I do, the nose. The nose does not go far into the future; it does not turn corners; it makes no convolutions. It always points straight at what is under the eyes. Do what is a plain duty, and don't consider what is far ahead. It seems to me that this is a simple and direct obligation. Tell your father.'

She was silent, unable to answer.

'Now, Josephine,' said the vicar, 'I know what you are considering, and that is, the question he will ask, why you were up at midnight. Tell him you had gone out into the garden, and through the gate to the seawall. Here I arrive at the chief bone I have to pick with you. If you had said to me on that night that you had come out to see the full tide flowing in the moonlight, I would have believed you. Your interview with Dick Cable would in my eyes have been accidental. But you did not say this. You told me that you came there—at midnight, remember, when every one else at Rose Cottage was in bed—to give Dick a box of gilt crackers for his children. You held out the box, to substantiate your story. Did you consider what this implied? It implied that you knew Cable was out at the gate at that time. You could only have known that by making an appointment with him to be there; and this—really, Josephine, with the respect I have always felt for you, and for Dicky Cable—this is a thought that troubles me a great deal.'

'I had made no appointment.'

'I am relieved to hear you say so. Then how did you know he was there?'

'Because I heard him whistling on the wall a tune—the mermaid's song in *Oberon*.'

'Really, Josephine!—God forgive me! I do not wish to entertain evil thoughts of any one, least of all of you. But this is most extraordinary. I have heard of housemaids arranging with their swains to whistle for them when they are outside the back-yard—and this looks much like the housemaid practice exalted to parlour tricks.'

'I am sorry you think so,' said the girl haughtily. 'I

cannot help your thoughts, rector. It was, however, no such thing.'

'I believe you. Charity hopeth all things, charity believeth all things. But I am puzzled, nevertheless.'

'I will tell you how it came about,' said Josephine after a long pause. 'Mr. Cable had learned the tune from me when we were wrecked together. After you left us, and Aunt Judith had said good-night, instead of going to bed, I sat out in the summer-house, and whilst there, I heard Mr. Cable whistle the air. Then I recollected I had put aside a box of crackers for his children, and I fetched them, and took them out to him.'

'It was most inconsiderate, Josephine.'

'No doubt it was; but I did not suppose you would have caught me.'

'Whether I caught you or not is beside the matter. You should not do such things. You should think.'

'I followed my nose,' said Josephine. 'I did not consider consequences. I acted on the impulse of the moment—a harmless one.'

'A most improper one.'

'What! To give sugar-plums to little children!'

'To go out in the dead of night to meet a single man, to whatever class of life he may belong. My dear, what a pity you have no mother!'

'Shall I ask my father to give me another?'

'Josephine, this is no joking matter. If you are not more considerate, you will compromise yourself past recovery. You may be thankful no one knew of this escapade except myself and Algernon. Now, go and tell your father about it.'

'He knows I was up that night.'

'What! Does he know everything?'

'No—only that I was up.'

'Tell him all. Never seek to be other than open. I am glad you told him that. It will make it easier for you to tell him the whole truth—the rest that has been kept from him.'

'No, rector,' said Josephine impatiently; 'I will tell him nothing; I have told him nothing.'

'Yet you say he knows.'

'I do not say I told him. He may suspect. He may have seen me come in.'

'No, Josephine; he went to bed directly after Algy and I left, as he suffered from a bilious headache. I thought he was not himself that evening. So he was asleep long before you were on the seawall, and he did not wake till you roused him.'

'Who told you that?'

'Himself. I heard him say so several times—to the insurance agent, for one.'

'Then I will say nothing more,' exclaimed Josephine. 'Think what you will of me. I cannot clear myself.' She laughed bitterly. 'I have a maid-servant mind. I make appointments to meet my young man on the sly after midnight; I bid him whistle when he is at the trysting-place; I slink out and meet him. What a pity you came, rector, and interfered; we might have eloped together, and then been had up and charged with incendiarism, and sentenced to hard labour for seven years. What fun! I should have liked that amazingly—seven years taken care of, thought for, with no responsibilities, no enigmas to puzzle out, no society before which to wear a mask, no necessity laid on me for lies and dissimulation.'

'Josephine! Have you lost your head?'

'No, rector, except with excitement at the prospect of such blessedness as to be in for seven years. O rector! let me rob you of your watch and get convicted. I should dearly like it. To think of knowing exactly where I was, of having a perfect conviction that the ground under my feet was solid, of having all one's world in sharply defined categories; these men are warders, and not criminals; these are criminals, myself included—I burn down houses, you say—and are not warders. And this man in a black coat, with whiskers and white tie, is not a criminal nor a warder, but a chaplain. Here, without, no one knows who is who, and what is what. You, dressed as a parson, may be my warder; and Richard Cable, disguised as a sailor, may be my chaplain; and my father, who carried the gospel to the dispersed Tribes, may be a lost Israelite, wanting the gospel more than the rest. Who can tell? What am I? I do not know—a true girl, a liar, honourable, deceitful—a lady, a maid-servant? I do not know myself what I am, much less do I know others.'

'Josephine,' said the rector gravely, 'you are talking in a random manner. I sought your confidence, and you have refused it me. I cannot allow you to act as recklessly as you

talk. I shall be forced—what I wished to have avoided—to speak to Miss Judith about you.'

'As you will,' said Josephine with a sigh. 'I do not wish, dear rector, to reject your offer, but I cannot help myself. Do you understand how sometimes one may be puzzling with a tangled skein of silk or common twine, trying to undo the knots and to find the end; and how that then, if another comes up and offers to assist you, you decline the help, because you are sure the second set of fingers will complicate the tangle and unravel nothing?'

'What is the skein you are engaged in bringing to order?'

'I do not know—my life, my ideas—the whole of that vast complexity, social, moral, religious, in which I find myself. Now, rector, do you understand me?'

He shook his head. 'My dear Josephine, it seems to me that, instead of unravelling anything, you are involving yourself in a tangle. As for the moral and religious orders——'

'There is no order in them.'

'Pardon me—my office is to help——'

'Excuse me, dear Mr. Sellwood. No one, not even you, can help me. I must work out my puzzle for myself. Say it is not a tangle, but a cat's-cradle.'

'That needs two to play at it.'

'Yes, but I must choose my own partner.'

'Let me say one word, dear Josephine, and that shall be my last, on this matter. You speak of a tangle. There always will be, there always must be complexity in life. At the same time, there is one little gold thread which, if you will hold and follow, will help you to unlace every loop, and unweave every knot, which will help to draw out every convolved thread, and establish complexity where you have supposed was confusion. Look for the golden thread, Josephine.—Good-bye.'

The corners of his mouth were working. He had a kind heart. He had known the girl from childhood. He pitied her, and he was in serious alarm for her.

'I have muddled even this,' said Josephine to herself. 'I have been rude and offended him, and he is kind; but he also, with his kind intentions, is always doing wrong things. It seems to me as if I were set a task to write a copy of copperplate penmanship on a sheet of blotting-paper. Where I want to make hair-strokes, I make smudges; and every flourish I attempt resolves itself into a shapeless blot. Now,

with every desire to do me good, the rector will make matters worse; he will tell Aunt Judith all, and she will speak to my father. So he complicates the tangle in which—how wrong he was!—there is no golden thread, only base twine and strands of dirty silk.'

CHAPTER XV.

THE 'JOSEPHINE.'

JOSEPHINE remained brooding where the rector had left her, with knitted brows and plaited fingers and set lips. 'I wish I were out of this—living a simpler life, where I could see my way plain before me.'

Then she heard 'Hist! hist' and looked about her, but discovered no one. Then again 'Hist! hist!' and looked up, and beheld the wan face of Mr. Gabriel Gotham, with bleached eyes, and faded hair, and weak trembling lips, looking down on her from the balustrade of the terrace above. She had been pacing a walk below the terrace—the verbena walk—with the rector.

The shaking white hand of the squire was round the base of a plaster vase; she could see only his nodding head and his hand, the fingers of which worked on the vase as if he were practising on a piano.

'Don't come up,' he said, as Josephine turned to the steps that led to the terrace; then he thrust his walking-stick between the pillars of the balustrade and indicated a spot below where she was to stand.

Josephine took up the position he required; and he spoke to her over the stone rail, with his chin resting on it and his hands hanging over it—a picture of imbecility. As his chin was on the stone, when he spoke the upper portion of his head moved, instead of the chin.

'What is it? What have you been doing? What about Richard Cable?

Josephine's frown deepened. It was too vexatious to have had her conversation with the rector overheard. 'Cousin,' she said, 'I have had a private conversation with Mr. Sellwood. I did not solicit it. He thrust it upon me. Neither

he nor I desired that it should have taken place within the hearing of an eavesdropper.'

'How rude you are to me!'

'A privilege of relations.'

'I did not intend to listen. I was here, and you were beneath. I did not hear everything. I did not suppose that you and the rector had anything to say to each other which the world might not hear.'

'What did you hear?' asked Josephine shortly.

'I—I do not rightly understand. I think something was said of your meeting Richard Cable at night, without your father's knowledge, on the seawall. But I did not catch how long these private interviews had been going on.—Oh! how improper!' then he exploded in a cackling laugh.

Josephine coloured. 'You have just heard enough to let your fancy run away with you, Mr. Gotham,' said she. 'It is true that I did go out through the gate at night to Mr. Cable, because I had some bonbons for his children. It was a brilliant moonlight night, as light as day, and I never for a moment thought there was any harm in my doing so. *Honi soit qui mal y pense.*'

'Did I hear that the hour was past midnight?' His blear eyes twinkled with cunning.

'Yes; it was past midnight. The vicar and Captain Sellwood had been dining with us. After dinner, I took the box down to Mr. Cable.'

'How did you know he was there? Had you appointed that he should be in waiting to receive the box?'

'Cousin Gotham,' exclaimed Josephine angrily, but with tears of mortification rising into her eyes, 'why am I to be subjected to catechism by you as well as by the rector, and go over to you the same story, make to you the same self-exculpation?'

'Because, my dear, I have heard of the circumstances. You will have to explain them and exculpate yourself to everyone who hears about this midnight meeting, the sweet tête-à-tête.'

'No one else will hear of it. It was an accident.—It was a bit of thoughtless imprudence on my part. I will not do it again.'

'A nine days' wonder to all the parish. How the old women will talk! and the sailors joke over their ale about it!'

'No one will know anything about it but yourself, who

have surprised the secret—not that it is a secret. I meant nought by going out on the wall but what I have said, to carry a bonbon box to the children.—I declare!' Josephine burst forth angrily, 'I will never attempt to do a kind thing again. It is not often the fancy takes me. When I do a considerate act, I have to suffer for it. You are learning that, Cousin Gotham, also. You have housed us after the fire, and cannot shake us off.'

'I do not want to be rid of you, Josephine.'

'And Aunt Judith? Is the attachment so great that you cannot part with her?'

Mr. Gotham laughed, his head waggling on the balustrade as though it were loose and rolled on it, and might at any moment roll off.

'Have you read of the Struldbrugs, Cousin Gotham?'

'What—in "Gulliver's Travels?" The old people who never die?'

'Yes. Papa says that he cannot believe in Struldbrugs, because they would have all their juices drawn out of them by their friends and acquaintances. Friends and acquaintances become to old people barnacles that adhere and perforate. They can be shaken off by those who are young, but not by the old, and they cover up and corrode the latter. I think we are barnacles stuck upon you.'

'Am I a Struldbrug? or a drift-log? Did your father say that? Or is this a piece of your pertness?'

'Oh, he was not particularly alluding to you,' answered Josephine. 'At least I do not remember that he was.'

Mr. Gotham got up, and let Josephine see that he did not consist only of head and hands. 'Shall we go a little stroll together?' he said. 'Will you take my arm?'

'I shall be delighted,' answered Josephine, and waited, and held out her arm for him to take. That was what he meant by her taking his arm: she was to support him.

He came tottering down the steps. Josephine, tall and vigorous, full of the bloom of youth, formed a striking contrast to this mean, decrepit old man.

'Am I a Struldbrug?' he asked, leering up in her face. 'What was your father talking about that he should come upon the Struldbrugs?'

'I really do not remember.'

'Or old logs washed up covered with barnacles?'

'No; he did not speak of you as a log, cousin.'

'I should not be surprised if he had been thinking of me. I suspect he speaks one thing to my face and another to my back. I may be esteemed a Struldbrug or a log; but I am not one or other. I have eyes in the lobes of my ears, and can see more than some suspect.' Then he cackled. 'The barnacles may not find so much to suck out of me as they reckon upon.'

'Where shall we go, Cousin Gotham?'

'Oh, anywhere. I want a change.—On to the seawall,' he continued, laughing, shaking his sides and the hand that rested on Josephine's arm.

'That fire has been a terrible loss to your father,' he said, still laughing. 'His books—his wine—his plate! He will save something in housekeeping by living here, barnacling on me, as you call it. The insurance was heavy. I really should not have thought your father had such valuable furniture and wines and books. But it will not be paid for six months, I suppose?'

'I know nothing about it,' said Josephine abruptly.

'Why do you not call me Cousin Gabriel?' asked Mr. Gotham. 'You know we are relations. Your father's mother was a Gotham, sister of my father, and of old Uncle Jeremy, who bought this place.'

'Which way shall we go?' asked Josephine, without answering his question.

He waved his stick in the direction he desired to walk; then he went on: 'Your father no doubt reckons on having the Hall when I am gone. Has he ever spoken of the changes he will be making in it? Trees he will cut down, rooms he will alter?' He peered up in her face craftily.

Mr. Cornellis had done this. Josephine would not say he had not, so she diverted the attention of the old man to something else, a thing easily done. 'I suppose now I can bring the Cable children here any day, as you desired, to look for sugared almonds in the wren-nests?'

'Not for the world!' exclaimed Gabriel with a start. 'I would not have it done now, whilst your father is here. It might be thought a precedent, and he would not like it; he who is to inherit the place when that old Struldbrug, Gotham, is withered and cast away, when that old log is so barnacle-bored as to be worthless.'

'He could not object, if you wished it.'

'I wish it no longer.'

'I am sorry I mentioned the Struldbrugs to you. You continue referring to them, as though my father or I had associated you with them in idea, which is not the case.'

'I do not desire that the children should be brought to the garden now. It was another matter before. Then I had nothing to amuse me, now I have you.'

'I will do what I can for you, Cousin Gotham. I shall make you skip and wince with the stings of my sharp tongue.'

'I do not mind that; but I do object to be riddled by barnacles.'

They were near the willows and the cottage inhabited by the Cables. Gabriel looked uneasily about him, as though seeking something, yet fearing to find it. He started as, turning the corner of the wall, he came upon Richard.

Richard Cable removed his cap respectfully to him and to Josephine. The latter coloured and smiled.

'How are the little white mice?' she asked. 'All seven snug and neat and happy?'

'Thank you, miss; my children are well and happy, praised be God!'

'Mr. Richard Cable,' said Gabriel Gotham with a faltering voice, 'would you do Miss Cornellis the favour of following us to Messrs. Grimes and Newbold's dock?'

Josephine hastily turned and looked at the old man. She had forgotten all about the ship, in the excitement consequent on the fire. Gabriel had not again alluded to it; and she had concluded, if for a moment she had considered the proposal, that it had passed from his feeble memory. Now she was quite unable to pay for a ship, as her money was gone; and since that affair of the night of the fire, it would not be proper for her to give the vessel to Richard. She tried to catch Mr. Gotham's eye, to show him that the suggested visit displeased her; but he studiously averted his face.

'Mr. Cable,' said Josephine, 'do not come with us. Mr. Gotham and I were engaged in conversation which we must finish. Follow us in a few minutes in the direction of the dock. First run in and kiss the little ones for me. By that time Mr. Gotham and I will have finished our business together.'

Richard obeyed. He went over the plank-bridge to his garden. Then Josephine, dropping Gabriel's arm, said hastily,

eagerly: 'It won't do. It must not be. I thought you had forgotten all about the boat, or I would have spoken earlier.'

'Why not? The vessel is ready; she is painted, and named. The orders were given directly we had made the arrangement.'

'O Mr. Gotham, what is to be done?' gasped Josephine. 'I cannot pay you, neither now nor in the future.'

'Cannot pay now; but you have your money coming in shortly.'

'Not at all. Papa—that is—there has been a bad investment. I do not know exactly how it is, but—papa has been unfortunate about my money. He put it where he thought he had the best security, and—the money is all gone.'

'Your mother's fortune gone?'

'All gone. I have nothing.'

Then he cackled. 'What an unfortunate fire that was at Rose Cottage!'

Josephine, in distress and annoyance, turned sharply away. 'You understand, Cousin Gotham, I cannot pay for the ship —now—never.'

'But it is bought and paid for in your name, and your name stands in gold letters on the bows. A pity we did not have a cast from your face for the figurehead.'

'O Mr. Gotham!'—she clasped her hands—'why did you act with such precipitation?'

'Why did you not tell me in time that you were without means? You can sue your father, and make him indemnify you out of the insurance-money.' He laughed.

'I cannot do that,' she said vehemently. 'Why do you laugh? This is no joke. You have brought me into great difficulties.'

'There; do not be so distressed. I have risked the money without taking a written authority from you. I have been incautious. I must bear the loss.'

'But I cannot take advantage of you in this way.'

'Let me take your arm again, and go on to the yard. Set your mind at rest. You and your father and aunt are my nearest kindred. If you cannot pay, it does not greatly matter. I must leave you something in my will. I will forgive you the debt in my last testament; you shall consider it as the present of Cousin Gabriel. That will set your conscience at rest. Eh?' He peered up at her.

Josephine was not satisfied. She was vexed with Mr.

Gotham, who was a man to talk, but not to act; and he had sprung a surprise upon her which increased her difficulties. 'These unreliable men,' she thought, 'always do the things which had better be left alone, and neglect what they ought to execute promptly. Who would have supposed he would take me at my word without further consultation? What will my father say?'

As they reached the yard, Richard Cable caught them up, and walked respectfully behind.

'Come on, Mr. Cable; don't lag,' said Gabriel. 'Miss Cornellis has come to see this smack that Messrs. Grimes and Newbold have been building, and which she has bought—a yacht, you understand. She is so fond of the sea, had such a taste of it when she was out in the lightship, that she wants more. She would like your opinion of the vessel, Mr. Cable. I am no judge. I have nothing to do with it except to act for her as her agent in the matter. If she had ordered me to engage for her a Newfoundland dog, I would have done so.'

Josephine's face was dark with annoyance and shame. She would have protested, but saw that it would avail her nothing. The mischief was done, the ship was ordered and paid for in her name. It was hers whether she wished it or not; and of course she could not retain it herself. The little craft was one to charm a sailor's heart, trim and fresh, beautifully proportioned from stem to stern. She had plenty of floor, while her lines aft were delicately fine, and her long hoist and light draught promised fast sailing powers. Her builders, Messrs. Grimes and Newbold, were proud of her; and the fishermen and sailors who studied her as they walked round her, like dealers about a horse, gave their opinion in her favour as a model combination of strength and speed. She was freshly painted, and her figurehead glittered with the new gilding put on it.

'Well, Mr. Cable,' said Gabriel Gotham, 'what do you say to her?'

'She's a beauty,' answered Richard—'no mistake.'

'Ought to be a beauty,' sniggered the squire; 'named after Miss Cornellis. You see—she is the "Josephine."'

'Yes,' said Richard. 'And not beautiful only. She is all spank with paint and gilding now, and that will be battered away with wind and wave, and worn with time; but she will be good and seaworthy, and obey her helm.'

'Should you like to be captain of the "Josephine"?'

asked Gotham, looking slyly first at him, and then round at the builder and some of the workmen who stood by, and were listening.

'I've not the chance,' said Cable.

'If you had the chance?' asked the squire.

'I'd do my duty by her,' answered Cable.

'You would do your duty by any trust,' said Josephine, gathering up the courage to speak. She was afraid of what Mr. Gotham might say; she did not like his tone—it chafed her. If the announcement must be made, it were better that it came from her.

'Mr. Cable,' she said, and, as she spoke, she trembled with nervousness, 'you rendered me a great service when I might have been lost. I owe you my life. I have not sufficiently thanked you for your great kindness to me in my peril and distress.' She spoke so far with downcast eyes; but as she remembered the lightship and what had passed on it, his pity, his gentleness towards her, she looked up into his face. Her olive skin was suffused with colour; her large beautiful eyes trembled with timidity, and she continued: 'You will not be so unkind now, Mr. Cable, as to refuse to accept from me this little acknowledgment of your goodness to a poor storm-tossed, shipwrecked girl. It would hurt me inexpressibly were you to do so. Will you—will you accept the "Josephine," and be her captain and owner?'

She put out her hand—her heart was full, partly with fear, partly with warm feeling—and laid it on Cable's arm. He caught her hand between his rough palms, and said: 'I thank you. I will not refuse. I cannot refuse. I will do my duty by her, miss.'

CHAPTER XVI.

IN DOCK, OUT NETTLE.

'Ha!' said Mr. Gotham, 'there is the rector.—Excuse me, Josephine; I must leave you here. I have business with Mr. Sellwood, and shall be with him a little while. You must walk home alone, or—or get Mr. Cable to escort you.' Then he hobbled, wheezing, to the rector, holding out his hand.

'If Miss Cornellis wishes an escort,' said the captain, who was with his father, 'I offer myself.'

'Thank you, Captain Sellwood; I accept it,' answered Josephine, and turned to go back to the Hall along the shore without another look or word for Richard Cable. It would not do for her further to favour him, after the gift of the vessel, especially in the presence of so many bystanders. She walked slowly along the shore beside the captain. On the right was the seawall for a little way, with a ditch behind it full of bulrushes, waving their red-brown heads. On the left, the flats of mud, with the tide running in the channels. Their feet were on the narrow strip of shingle, made up of flints, fragments of rolled chalk, and lumps of coral rag. A film of bleached seaweed and cast crab shells formed an almost unbroken fringe. A little further ahead was rising ground, broken banks covered with old oaks, under which, in spring, the bluebells abounded; they were now in flower, flushing with blue bloom the little slope. Here there was no seawall; there was no need for one. Beneath the bank was a long strip of coarse smooth grass, which went locally by the name of the Bowling-green. This was only covered by high spring tides. It was perfectly level, and may at one time have been used in the way its name implied. It was not suitable for cricket, because it was narrow. Moreover, a spring oozed out of the bank, and became a swamp on the land side of the bowling-green. At the extremity of the green walk this rill discharged itself into the sea; and there a few piles had been driven into the soft soil, on which the feet could rest whilst passing over to solid ground beyond. Then the sandy cliff—if cliff it can be called where no stone showed—ceased, dying away, and the seawall began again.

Captain Sellwood walked beside Josephine without saying much, and she was too much occupied with her thoughts to desire conversation. When, however, they came on the bowling-green, the only picturesque bit of the coast where utter flatness and mud did not force themselves on notice, Captain Sellwood worked himself up to converse.

'It is a fine day, to-day.'

'Yes; I perceive it is so.'

'I am sorry so many of the old oaks here have been cut down.'

'I also am sorry. We cannot afford, on this coast, to part

with a single element of beauty. He who pollards a willow or destroys an oak should be stoned to death.'

'We should have to send over to Kent for the stones, as we produce none on the spot.'

They walked on a little further in silence; then the captain said: 'I may not have such another opportunity, Miss Cornellis, so I seize on this for a few private——'

'Oh, Captain Sellwood! in pity spare me. I have had two keelhauls already to-day; first by your father, and then by Mr. Gotham.'

'I am not going to keelhaul you.'

'Then let us have no private and confidential communications. Do look at the bluebells, and admire the mixture of red-robin, also the occasional speckle of stellaria.'

'I must speak to you, Miss Cornellis. The happiness of my life depends on the answer——'

Again she interrupted him; she was nervous, annoyed. She suspected at once what he was about to say, and was unprepared for it. She had not thought of Algernon Sellwood except as a butt for her ridicule, the slow man, who had nothing to say for himself, the Morbid Fly.

'Mr. Sellwood,' she said hastily, 'we are old acquaintances, I may almost say friends. You are about to assume the privilege of a friend, and lecture me for my imprudence the other night. I have committed another imprudence to-day: I have made a present of the new boat Messrs. Grimes and Newbold are building, to Richard Cable, because he saved my worthless life; and—here is the absurdity of the situation—I have not a penny wherewith to pay for the vessel. It was ordered when I thought myself rich, and I have woke up to the fact that I am a pauper. I am going out as a governess; no—I could not endure the children—as a seamstress or milliner, or something of the sort, to earn my bread.'

'Is this possible, Miss Josephine?'

'It is certain, Captain Sellwood. My father has had terrible losses; and *my* money—I mean what my mother left—that is all lost also; so that we are left as mere barnacles, clinging to Cousin Gotham.'

'Dear Miss Josephine, as this is so, it only makes me more resolved to proceed.'

'Do you know what it is to be a barnacle, Captain Sellwood? To have all the faculties of the mind concentrated on suction?—No; you do not. I have read in some book of

Natural History that the barnacle is a nautilus, provided with silver wings to sail on the surface of the summer sea; but as it gets battered by winds and upset by waves, it draws in its glittering sails and sinks and attaches itself to a stump or a keel; absorbs its wings, or converts them into a proboscis or foot, or whatever it is by which it can adhere, and is degraded at once utterly and for ever from a nautilus to a barnacle. Well—*we* have furled our wings, doffed our mother-of-pearl lustre, and have become scaly and purple, and begun to taste of copperas; we have lost all our independence, and are converted into parasites.'

'Dear Miss Josephine,' said the captain, 'you are throwing me off, trying at least to do so; but you shall not divert me from my purpose. I must speak.'

'What about? My folly the night of the fire? Oh, Captain Sellwood, I would not have believed it, unless convinced by my eyes, that you could in an emergency be so ready. How spiritedly you went over the pales! Was your light overcoat much torn? The wood bristles with hooks like a teasel. And your sense of *les convenances* was as much lacerated as your overcoat by my preposterous behaviour.'

'I beg your pardon, Miss Cornellis; you explained how you came on the wall, and that was enough. Neither my father nor I had the slightest right to ask an explanation. When you gave us one, we accepted it as final.'

'Not your father—he refused to receive it. He has done so again to-day.'

'I received it; I have not presumed to question it.'

'You are more charitable than even your father.'

'Towards you there is no call for charity.'

'You think better of me than does either your father or my cousin Gotham.'

'I think the very best of you. I know that you are incapable of doing anything which could make me regard you otherwise than with respect, as I do'—he paused, and then said in a low tone—'and with love.'

'With friendship,' corrected Josephine. 'I thank you for your kindly estimate; it is more generous than I deserve. Come—what do you think of my conduct of giving away a ship to Mr. Cable when I have not the money to pay for it? Is not that a swindle?'

'I think, Miss Josephine, that your generosity outruns your judgment, whether in the matter of ships or of crackers,'

'I thank you for your kind opinion,' she said, touched at his consideration. She had laughed at him as silent and dull, yet now he spoke well and easily. She might possibly have yielded to a warmer feeling, had she not recalled her father's words, and remembered that he had schemed that she should take the captain. Her rebellious temper at once rose, and she said: 'You only half know me. I am like the palings, full of hooks and spikes; those whom I catch I tear; those who rest a hand on me, I pierce with wounds.'

'Miss Josephine, when you were a child and played Blind-man's Buff, when caught, you wriggled, and wrenched, and ducked till you had corkscrewed your way out of the grasp of the Blind-man. You are trying the same game with me now; but it will not succeed. I have come here determined to say what I have at heart and to know your answer.'

'I give you the answer at once, before you ask the question. It is conditional.—Does your father hold me in as high esteem as yourself?'

He hesitated. 'My father is the most kind of men.'

'And yet,' said Josephine, 'he thinks ill of me. He does not approve of your speaking to me to-day. I know he does not.—Say no more. Your father must think of me as you profess to think, before I listen to another word of what you have at heart.'

'You will not hear me out?'

'No; I have ducked and eluded your grasp. Yonder is the path to the rectory. I am going home, sir, and need no further escort.' Then she burst into a merry laugh.

'What is the joke?' asked the captain with a reproachful look in his great dark eyes. 'Is it a joke, Miss Cornellis, that a man should have laid his heart at your feet and you should have trodden on it?'

'How serious you are, Captain Algernon!' she said, the laugh dying on her lips. 'Excuse me, if I see droll similitudes. You are generally so silent, and have so little to say when we talk on common matters, and now you are eloquent.'

'Because it is not a common matter on which we speak.'

'No; you are like the gannet. I had a tame one in the garden for some time. It could not fly because it was on level ground. It flapped its short wings against the grass and waddled. One day I set the bird on the top of a high wall; at once it precipitated itself into the air, and away it flew, and soared, and was speedily out of sight. The solan goose is

incapable of doing more than flap and waddle when on a level; it must be on high to be able to start for a flight. Is not that like yourself, Captain Sellwood? Have I hurt you? *Gare la cheville barbelée!* I warned you against the spikes and crooked nails.—There is your path, and this way lies mine.'

He obeyed her, and went along the path through the clover field she indicated. She looked after him, and at once regretted that she had spoken about the solan goose. It was not kind, after his deference to her. They had known each other for years, and she had often challenged him with her jokes, and laughed because he was slow to respond, or, to speak more truly, incapable of responding. She had carried her joke too far; she had indeed wounded the man when he had shown her a good and generous heart. As he opened it to her, she had struck it. Did she dislike him? No; she had a regard for him—not a keen one; he had never interested her; but as a member of a worthy and well-to-do family she respected him; as an old associate of childhood she liked him. That was all. Regard, respect, liking, went no further. Only to-day did she see that there was in him more than showed in common life. Only now did she perceive that in him was that which might convert negative regard into positive affection. She felt tempted to run after him and say: 'I am sorry, Captain Sellwood, that I spoke about the gannet and made fun of you. I was in a perverse mood.'

But her pride would not suffer her to do this. If she had done this, he would have forgiven her immediately, as she well knew, as also that he would immediately have pursued his advantage and proposed fully to her. She did not wish that. She did not know her own mind. It was true she did not love him, but she loved no one. If she must marry, Captain Sellwood was harmless; and a husband who would not be exacting and promised docility might suit her better than another. She had made a mistake again. She had treated a serious offer with levity. She had met it in an improper spirit; and she had insulted the man who had shown her the most generous trust, in spite of appearances to her disadvantage.

It was her fate to be always saying and doing the wrong things. Why was she so wayward in heart that she revolted against those who proposed to lead her and against anything suggested to her? The reason she did not know. The reason was that from childhood she had seen only falseness, and had contracted suspicion against her father, her aunt, against

every one and everything, so that the natural truthfulness of her nature was in a chronic condition of hedgehog with bristles erect. She was perverse because she wanted to go straight where all was crooked, and when she came among those who were sincere and honourable, she was unable at once to take her direction. There are conditions of the body in which the eyesight is disturbed, and sees the air full of floating black spots. The eye may look into the purest of skies, but the vision is blurred with these sailing stains, as clouds of midges. It is so with the mental vision; when the spirit is not in good health, it also sees obscurely, and its vision is full of deceptive black spots. It was thus with Josephine. The moment the captain was gone, she knew that she had behaved badly; she had seen only the ridiculous in him, and that she had thrown away a chance which she ought not to have cast aside unconsidered. When we are troubled with floating black specks, we know at once that we need a tonic or an alterative dose. We consult a doctor, and are uncomfortable till these irritating black spots clear from our sight, and we can look our neighbours in the face, or into the silver summer cloud, without seeing that disturbing drift. But we are not so anxious to correct the moral vision; and we are content to look at all who surround us, and see these specks, and let them thicken and become multitudinous, without an effort to dispel them, and—here is the singularity of the case—we do not seem aware that the spots are not where we look, but in ourselves. It is our own disordered mind which sends them up as a cloud of midges from a stagnant pool.

Josephine was startled out of her brown study by a hare that dashed over the seawall and ran splashing through the water athwart the mudflats towards the sea. Quite small matters sometimes divert our minds from great considerations, and it was so now with Josephine. She looked round, and saw that the captain in crossing the clover field had disturbed the hare, and the creature raced away towards the open sea.

'You poor fool,' she said, 'flying from an imaginary danger, you are running to your death.'

The captain had no gun. A race of water, now shallow, lay between the flats and the shore. Unless the hare returned immediately, the rising tide would intercept it before the flats were flooded.

She looked after the hare till she could see it no more. Then she walked on to the willows, and, feeling tired, not so

much from walking as from worry of mind, she seated herself on the little plank-bridge, with her feet hanging above the placid water of the dike. The dike was here broad and deep. Along the coast, a channel behind the seawall receives the drainage from the land, and at intervals discharges itself into the sea through sluices so contrived that the rising tide closes the doors. When, however, the sea has fallen, then the pressure of the fresh water behind opens the sluices, and the stream pours away down a channel it has cut for itself and also paved for itself with pebbles, lying between the clay banks. One such channel extended from the dike to the open sea at the end of Cable's garden. Up channels such as this boats can approach the shore, and in such channels bathers disport themselves without fear of sinking in the mud, because of the pebbly floor. The tide was out, consequently there was movement in the moat; all the blossoming, white, yellow-centred water-plantain was drifting one way with the current. By the margin, the pink flowering rush stooped in the same direction.

Josephine's head was throbbing and hot; she removed her hat, and bending down to the water, gathered a couple of handfuls of plantain, and filled her hat with it and put it on her head. The cold wet leaves and flowers sent freshness into her heated brain; the water ran down her cheeks, her hair, and over her forehead. She sat still, enjoying the coolness, resolving, when the leaves had spent their freshness, to replace them with others. Then Richard Cable came to the plank end and said: 'You here, miss! What are you doing?' Then, seeing the moisture on her cheeks, 'Surely not crying?'

'In dock, out nettle,' answered Josephine. 'I am drawing the fire out of my brain with water-plants.'

'Still troubled with bad thoughts, Miss Cornellis?'

'Always. I cannot get rid of them—always stinging and burning; and I am angry with myself to-day; I have done so many foolish things. There; these plantains give me no more ease.' She took off her hat and threw out the crushed herbs. 'Am I in your path? Do you want to go by, Mr. Cable?'

'No,' said he. 'Do not let me disturb you. Is your head very hot?'

'Like a coal of fire.'

Then he put his rough sailor hand on her head; but though the hand was rough, the touch was gentle as if a plantain leaf had lighted on it.

'Hold your hand there,' said Josephine, 'it is better than the dripping leaves.'

'Do you remember what I said to you a little while ago?' he asked, still with his hand on her throbbing head.

'What?' she asked, without stirring.

'It was anent the ladder, miss. You will never have a cool head and walk with steady heart till you can do that.'

'Do what?' she asked again, and did not move her head.

'Please, miss,' he said, his rough voice lowered and becoming soft, 'when I was a little chap, I was sent up the shrouds in a gale of wind. When I was aloft, I looked down, and it seemed as if I was lost—the sea was like as if it was rising to swallow me, and the ship was heeling over, and I must fall and be drowned. My head went round like a teetotum, and my heart sank into my shoes. I should have let go and gone overboard, and there'd have been no Dicky Cable alive now; but the mate—he saw what was up, and he shouted to me: "*Look aloft, lad—look aloft!*" and I did, miss. You'll excuse if I'm forward. No impertinence meant, miss.'

He withdrew his hand and the fire came back into her brain.

'I cannot,' she said; 'indeed, I cannot. I have not the power.'

CHAPTER XVII.

AS THE HARE RAN.

Richard Cable entered his cottage quietly; his mother was engaged with the children, preparing them for bed. Six little white things sat side by side in their nightshirts, with their small feet hanging down, on the bedside, their yellow hair combed out, wet, and spread over their shoulders. Mrs. Cable was washing the baby, who was quite naked; and she had a thick towel, and was rubbing the little head, and working the short hair into curls by doing so. The baby did not mind the water or the towel; but the towel had a fringe, and the tiny fingers tried to catch the fringe and pull it out, with a view, doubtless, to ultimately eating it.

Over the bed was cast a blue-and-white check coverlet;

and the walls were whitewashed. There were white valance and curtains to the small window. Above the bed was a coloured chromo-lithograph of Christ blessing little children; and under that, a photograph of Polly, the mother of the seven.

'There is your father,' said Bessie Cable; 'say your prayers to him.—Now—not all of you at once off the bed.—Sit still, Effie and Jane; take care of Lettice and Susie; they will tumble.—Mary first; only the twins shall say their prayers together, because they are twins.'

So Mary, as the eldest, descended from the bed and came over the floor, her little feet, still wet, printing themselves on the deal-boards. She knelt down at her father's knees as he sat on a low chair, and began her prayers. He removed his hat, and as the golden evening light poured into his face through the window, he put his hand over his eyes. Then, when Mary had done, she stood up, kissed her father, and scrambled on to the bed again; whilst Effie and Jane slid down and knelt, one at the right foot, the other at the left, of their father and closed their little hands on his knees.

When all had done but the baby, then there were six of the prettiest little heads laid on white pillows in one bed, three at head and three at foot, all with twinkling blue eyes and smiling lips and golden hair. Then Richard, with his great rough hand, smoothed the sheet, turned down at top under all the little chins, and stood and looked at them.

'Do you know,' said he, 'that here on this flat Essex coast in spring the sea-birds come and make their nests in the marshes and on the saltings? Now, if there were to be high tides then, the poor little fledglings would be drowned, and the parent birds would fly about screaming, broken-hearted, unable to do anything for their young. But God thinks of the sea-birds, and in spring on this coast, He sends us the *bird-tides*—that is, very low tides—all the while the little ones are in the nests and unable to escape. When your father was in the storm, and his boat broke from her anchors and was swept away and wrecked, he was not drowned. God thought of the little birds in their downy nest, and spared him for their sakes. There are bird-tides to men as there are to feathered fowl.—Now, go to sleep.'

His mother said: 'Dick! do look how baby has torn out my gray hair!'

He took the child, and spread out the tiny hand in his own

great palm and sat studying it. The infant was quite happy on her father's knee, feeling one strong arm about her.

'What is it, Dick?' asked Mrs. Cable.

'Nothing,' he replied; 'only, I was looking at the little mite of a hand, and thinking if there were not bird-tides to us, these tiny fingers and delicate little bones would never come to be great and strong and hard as mine.'

'I wish you'd take the bath down for me,' said Mrs. Cable. 'It's heavier than I can carry.'

'I'll give the soapy water to the young lettuce and broccoli —it will keep away the slugs,' said Richard.

Then he went down the few steps into the basement, holding the wooden tub, blue-painted, half-full of soapy water, in which his seven little children had been bathed. It was not easy to carry it down without spilling the contents in splashes on the stair; but Dick Cable was steady and sure-footed, as a sailor need be, and not a drop was upset. Then he went out with the tub into the garden and set it down near the bed of young plants that were to be soused with it. He returned to the kitchen for a bowl wherewith to ladle the water out, and found a tin one with a wooden handle. He knelt down by the tub and dipped the bowl. The sun was set—set to the garden; but some of the light still caught the willow-trees, and the dancing leaves were as of gold against the blue sky. He scattered the soapy water over the bed of seedlings; then he paused, kneeling on one knee, resting the bowl on the ground, and lapsed into thought. His face was troubled; usually open as the day, a cloud was on it now, a cloud that would not disperse. From far away, the mutter of the sea could be heard as the waves broke upon the clay banks; it formed a pleasant murmur, a low bass tune, whilst in the wind the twinkling willow leaves whispered falsetto. He dipped the bowl again and distributed some more soapy water.

The evening was very still. A dog was barking on a farm perhaps a couple of miles away. Mosquitoes began to hum about his ears. He paid them no heed; they would not molest him.

Presently his mother came out and surprised him, when he had not half emptied the tub. 'What, Dick! Not done this yet?'

'I must not pour it all at once on the bed, but let it sop in little by little.'

'Dick, what is the matter with you?'

'With me, mother?' He turned his head and looked up at her, he, still kneeling, she standing behind him.

'Yes, Dick. There is something. You've been more silent and thoughtful of late; and when you've taken the baby of nights, when fractious, and walked up and down trying to soothe it, you've not sung "There's Grog in the Captain's Cabin—Water down below," as you always used, but another tune altogether, that has no words to it.'

'I suppose I tired of the old song,' he said, smiling.

'And—"In the Bay of Biscay, O!" you have not sung that, she said.

'I'm tired of that also, perhaps.'

'But the new song has no words to it.—What is the matter with you, Dick?'

'Mother,' he answered gravely, 'I'll tell you straight out. For the first time in my life, I don't see my way plain before me. That is it.'

'What has come to obscure it, Dick?'

'Mother, do you know that Miss Cornellis has given me a ship—that which has been building of late in Grimes's yard; and she has called it after herself, the "Josephine"!'

'Well?' Mrs. Cable asked with a catch in her breath.

'And I don't know whether I ought to have accepted her, and I don't see how I could have refused; and I'm puzzled altogether—I am.'

'Why do you think you ought not to have accepted the boat?' asked his mother, looking intently at him.

He hastily ladled out some more soapy water. 'That's not so easy to answer,' he said, and considered again.

'Dick, you've been thinking a good deal of late of this Miss Josephine.'

'Yes, mother, I have; I could not help it.'

'You should have fought against the thought.'

'I do not know that. She seems to me to be just as I seed her that night of the storm, tossing and distracted, not knowing whither she is going, or how to row.'

'She's nothing to you. You are not her captain.'

He started; he remembered the words addressed to him when he was offered the boat. 'I'm troubled about her, mother.'

'But you can do nought for her.'

He did not answer at once; he threw out some more soapy water. 'If I could help her, and she called me to help

her, I would be bound to do my best.—Mother, what would you think of the captain who, in a gale o' wind saw another vessel in distress, signalling, and were to go on his course and give no heed? Nelson, when he was engaged in a naval battle, was told that his admiral had signalled to retreat. Then Nelson turned his blind eye in that direction, and vowed he could not see the summons to run away. But, mother, you would have me clap a blind eye to the quarter whence a poor little drifting, helmless, water-logged craft is appealing for help. 'Tain't seamanship that, mother.' Then he laid aside the bowl, but remained kneeling, looking down into the tub of soapy water, where two bubbles were floating, and he watched these bubbles curiously, as though their course concerned him. One was a large bubble, the other small; the water was in vibration, and they swung from side to side; but also, as it had a circular motion, they floated near each other, and the little one drew towards the great bubble, and the great one seemed about to take the small one in tow—no—at one moment as if they would coalesce in one. He was wonderfully taken up with these soap-bubbles. His mother stood by, looking at him, and he looked at these globes.

'My dear Dick,' said Mrs. Cable, 'you're deceiving of your own self. You think you're acting out of pure charity, and it's no such thing. There's something more than charity in your heart—there is love.'

He made no answer; he was engrossed in the course of those bubbles; they were riding side by side, swinging round the tub.

'It is of no use, Dick. You've heard what the sailors tell of the spirit-ship; all white painted, with white sails and gilded prow, crowding by in the moonlight. When she is hailed, she makes no answer; and when you are drawn on, all at once you are on a rock or a sandbank, and the spirit-ship has disappeared. She is this ship. She is very beautiful and strange, and an altogether unknown and un-understood craft to the likes of you. She belongs to another world to yours—and woe betide you if you follow her! She will lead you to your ruin. The sailors say that there are troubled souls in the spirit-ship that will find no rest till she is brought into port and to anchor. But what are you to board her and take the helm and conduct her? That is not for you—for such as you. It won't do. The spirits must man and guide the spirit-ship, and the mortals keep their distance.'

Then Richard Cable, still following the bubbles, put his finger to them, to insist on their uniting; and instantly they burst, and no trace remained.

'Dick,' continued his mother, 'it is all folly. She is a born lady, with a fortune and education, and gentle belongings and tastes and cultivated thoughts; and you're nought but a common sailor lad, with no money and no learning, and only a vulgar mother, and seven little children.'

He seized his mother's hand and kissed it, when she said —a vulgar mother. She took no notice, but went on: 'Seven little children, all exacting, and needing much forethought and patience to rear them aright. Now, how can you think it possible that such a one as Miss Josephine Cornellis should stoop so low as to you?'

'I do not think it,' he said hastily; 'I never have dared to think it possible. I would not ask it. But I cannot help myself. I must do what I can for her when she comes in her pleading way to me. She has no thought of me, nor I of her, other than as one vessel at sea signals to another, and that other makes towards her. Mother, when that is so, there is no thought of lashing the two together.'

'If the two vessels were so lashed, what would happen?'

'If the sea were rough, they'd sink each other, of course.'

'They'd sink each other, of course,' repeated Mrs. Cable. 'Remember that, Dick, and don't go too near her, nor let her come too near you. Keep a wide berth between you.'

'Mother,' said he, with his fingers in the soapy water, 'what am I to do about the boat she's given me?' Then he wrote, with his finger in the water, the name 'Josephine.'

'I do not know. I must consider. You will give up lightship work if you keep her.'

'Can I refuse her?'

'If you mind to stick to your present line of life, you can make that an excuse.'

'But I should hurt her, were I to refuse.'

'It may hurt her if you keep the boat. Folks will talk.'

'I might let the craft out and bide on in the Hanford port service myself as lightshipman.'

'It is a bad job either way. I wish you'd never come across Miss Cornellis.'

Richard shook his head. 'She was brought to me; I did not seek her. I was looking away to land over the dark frothing sea, to the belt of willows, thinking of my babes and

of you, mother, when all at once I saw her, and that she needed help.'

'And she drew you away in thought from them and from me?'

Again he shook his head. 'They are never out of my heart. Mother, it's just like this house; sometimes the children are singing and laughing in it, and sometimes they're coiled up and asleep. If I'm still at any moment, I think I can hear them all seven breathing, deep in me; and whilst I wait, I see their eyes open and smile at me. They are always there, but not always chirping.'

'And now you've let a young cuckoo in who will kick your own out.'

'That is not possible,' answered Richard Cable. 'If the Lord bade the cuckoo egg be laid, and the young cuckoo be reared in the same nest with the yellowhammers, is it for the parent bird and nest-builder to kick out the egg? The one heart can warm them all.'

'I wish to heaven you'd never seen anything of her! I can't wish she were drowned, but anything short of that; and I wish you'd not been called in to save her, and contract an acquaintance which will do you mischief, and no good.'

'I did not seek it. I keep away from her now as much as ever I can; but it comes over me that she is *sent* to me, or perhaps that I'm called to pilot her. I cannot help myself. I do my duty up to my light. In past times, there was no difficulty in seeing my way, and now there is—it begins to be not so plain. There's something disturbing the compass, and what that is, I cannot tell; but I'll get my bearings all right again shortly, never fear.'

'Dick,' said his mother, 'I've never spoken to you of your father, because it is no pleasure to either of us to think of him. He was a gentleman. I, a poor girl, an orphan. I was ignorant, and I thought, like you, that I could be a help and comfort to him. I found out my error too late. He was false and treacherous, and forsook me and you. All seemed to me right and simple before I took him: I could be of use to him in a thousand ways such as no lady could; and he was a man that needed me and all my little acquirements, homely as they were. But when we were married, then we found out that we did not agree together; he had his ways, and I mine; he was out of heart at once, and left me. You're making the same mistake that I did. Do you suppose

that the ostrich and the eagle think alike and have the same tastes? Why, the eagle is all for flying, and the ostrich for running; and the latter hides his head in the sand, and the other looks the sun full in the face without blinking. They see differently, think differently, have different pursuits. No, no, Richard, Miss Cornellis is a soaring, bold, and beautiful eagle; and you're nothing but an ungainly ostrich. Though I'm your mother, I say it.'

Then Richard laughed and stood up, holding the tub in both hands, and as he laughed, the soapy water danced and splashed in the tub. He took it to the head of the sloping bed, and tilted it on one side, and allowed the water to run down the furrows between the young plants, not quickly, but slowly, that it might sink in.

The evening had closed, but there was light in the sky, that beautiful pearly twilight which makes the June nights an echo of the day. As he was thus tilting the bath, he heard a cry, upset the rest of the water, sprang up the bank, and looked in the direction whence he heard it. In another moment he was over the bank. He had seen someone—a girl—Josephine in the channel, running in the shallow water, seawards, with extended arms; then he saw her fall, then pick herself up and run on. He pursued her. In that pebble-floored channel, the water deepened, the cold wavelets ran in from the open sea; if any one went on far enough, that person would be soon out of depth, between the clay banks, up which there was no climbing. The water was already deep; it was above her knees; she could no longer run; she threw herself down in the waves, and was at once caught and drawn out and held up by Cable.

'Miss Cornellis—Miss Josephine! what is it?'

She uttered another cry; she could not speak; but she put her arms round his neck and clung to him; and he carried her back, wading in the water, till he came to the seawall, then he crossed his plank bridge, and bore her into the cottage. As the hare had run a few hours before—poor fool—so had she.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE YOUNG CUCKOO.

JOSEPHINE was wet, shivering, not unconscious, but as one distracted, unable to answer questions. A second time Richard Cable bore her in his arms; but before she had been hot, with throbbing heart and heaving bosom; now she was cold, trembling, and her breath coming in sobs. How she clung—with every finger as though it were a claw. Richard could feel each several finger through his jersey. Her gasping breath was on his cheek. She made no attempt to speak, to explain her conduct, to account for what she had been doing.

He did not ask anything after the first hasty query, but carried her in his strong arms as firmly, as evenly as he had carried the bath of soapy water previously. He took her upstairs, and placed her in his mother's chair in the same room with the seven little children. There were only two bedrooms in the cottage—that occupied by the babes and their grandmother, and his own; the latter a lean-to room, into which the stair opened, and where only on one side was it possible to stand upright. Mrs. Cable followed him silently. The first thing to be done was to change the girl's clothes.

'I will run to the Hall for a dry suit,' said Richard.

Then Josephine started up and held out her hands with palms extended, quivering in remonstrance.

'Do you not wish it?' he asked gently. She shook her head. He saw that she tried to speak, opening her mouth; the lips were white, but she could not utter anything. 'Sit down again in the chair,' he said persuasively; 'my mother will lend you dry things.'

Then he went downstairs and made up the fire. A second time Josephine had been in his arms, a second time he had saved her from a watery death, and this time she was seeking her death. What had happened at the Hall?

Richard Cable left the room below; he could not be quiet; a restless fit came on him, and he went into the garden. He walked about there, found the blue tub empty, and brought it indoors. He listened, but could not hear that Josephine was speaking. His mother was silently attending on her. He heard the heavy tread of the old woman on the boards.

Ought he to go at once to the Hall and communicate with Mr. Cornellis? He did not know. Josephine evidently disliked the idea of his going there: but was it not his duty to go? He must wait a while till Josephine could explain what had occurred, and then he would know what course to adopt. He could not see the window of the bedroom from the garden; it looked out on the road; on the garden side was only roof. He went round into the highway and walked in the road, and looked up at the window. There was no light in it. No candle was needed; it looked north-west, and the northern sky was full of silvery light. Were all the children asleep? There was no little voice heard, not even that of the baby, who, as a privilege, was laid to sleep in its father's bed, and only taken into its grandmother's when she retired for the night. How shrewd little Bessie was! She would go to sleep in no other bed. In vain did her grandmother try to lull her to roost in her own room; the blue peepers would not shut. They looked dazed; and the heavy eyelids fell over them, then drew up again, and intelligence came into the eyes, and, alas, at the same time a peevish look, and whining began. Nothing would satisfy the tiny creature but to be put to sleep in the mean little lean-to room, on the small hard bed of the father, a bed he only occupied when off duty from the lightship. Of lightships, of duty, nine-month-old Bessie knew nothing; but she knew the lean-to roof and the little bed; and, by some mysterious instinct, was aware that it was her father's, and that she could sleep better in it than elsewhere.

When Richard Cable came upstairs for the night, the baby was gone, but in the pillow was a dint such as his fist might have made, and he knew it was the impress of Bessie's head.

He had spent thirteen contented years with his Polly: he had been much attached to Polly, whom he respected; but there had been no close union of souls in their marriage. Polly was a lusty lass when he married her, a hard-working girl, much engrossed in her daily tasks, and able to think and talk of nothing else. Richard was a meditative man; his mind was always engaged, though his hands were sometimes idle. His occupation on the lightship had fostered this habit. He did not open to many; he had few friends, but every one respected him. He had inherited from his mother the tendency to feel most interest in those who needed help, to love those who clung to him. His wife had been an independent

woman, going her own eminently practical way, asking for no guidance and support, because she needed neither; but it was different, of course, with the babes; they all were helpless; they all depended on their father, and therefore they filled a greater part of his heart than Polly had done. It is the place of the elm to sustain the vine; it is the privilege of the vine to cling to and ramble over the elm:

Ulmisque adjungere vites,
Conveniat—

as every schoolboy reading the 'Georgics' knows.

Nature has made some plants creepers and others sustainers. The creepers sometimes strangle their supports, if too embracing, contracting, exacting. A sustainer can hold up without hurt a vast amount of parasitic growth—honeysuckle wreaths, exhaling sweetness; evergreen, glistening ivy; crimson and gold clothed Virginian creeper. It is only when the clambering plant has thrown its tendrils over the head of the supporting tree that the tree breaks down under its burden. It is wonderful, sometimes, what a glory a commonplace tree will acquire from the parasite that clings to it: in itself it is nothing; as a means of displaying its mate, it is beautiful. I have seen an old dead trunk wreathed about with wisteria, beautiful with the lilac chains that hung about it; surrounding it with an atmosphere of honeyed sweetness; and I have seen human wisterias clinging, trailing, embalming, adorning dead memories. Though what they envelop and beautify is dead, it matters not; it is something about which they can cast their arms and hang their chains of flowers, and breathe forth the incense of their innocent souls.

These same climbers deserve a chapter in the great gardening manual of human souls. How indifferent they are to what they lay hold of, if only they may have a support. How the delicate little pink hands of the *Ampelopsis* grapple a piece of granite, and hold it that you cannot tear them away, and riot over it, and wave triumphant wreaths of victory and rejoicing. How the jessamine laces with ribbons of green round the rugged-barked pine, in preference to the smooth-skinned beech; and the pure *Devoniensis* holds to the common clay garden wall and laughs, leaning against it, with thousands of delicately blushing blooms, flowery whispers of happiness and love and pride; whereas it scarce shows a few blossoms, and the buds decay unburst against

the stately hewn-stone mansion wall. Why does the Bankshire prefer a cold and cheerless aspect to that which is hot with sun? Verily, the creepers deserve attention in the world-garden of humanity.

But, what are we about, rambling concerning ramblers? when our subject is the prop up which seven little climbers are throwing their tendrils, and, at this moment, an eighth, no seedling, has cast her arms and asked to be sustained, and lifted high out of the sordid soil?

Richard Cable saw the blind drawn in the lower cottage window, and then a flush of light over it; so he knew that his mother was below, and had kindled the lamp. Thereupon he went indoors, and found Josephine in his mother's Sunday dress, seated by the fire, in his mother's high-backed leather chair, a chair that had belonged to her father, who was drowned. Josephine was very pale and sallow; her hands rested on her lap; she was looking into the fire, and the flames reflected themselves in the large dark irises. She did not seem to observe Richard's entrance; she did not turn her head or raise her eyes.

Mrs. Cable was engaged between the back and front kitchen, getting some of Josephine's wet clothes cleaned of the mud that adhered, wringing them out, and putting them on lines where they might drip and dry.

Richard Cable went to the fireplace, and leaned against the brick jamb, looking at the girl. In the wooden houses of the coast, the chimneys are built of brick, and there is a brick basement on which the wooden walls rest.

'Please, Miss Cornellis, I'm sorry to interfere; but I'm bound to ask—what is to be done?'

She folded her hands, slightly raised her chin, and then her head sank again, and the eyes remained staring at the fire.

He waited a minute, still observing her, and then he said again, in a low, gentle voice: 'I'm sorry to be disturbing you wi' axing of questions as may seem impertinent, miss; but I'm bound to repeat the same thing—what is to be done?'

Again she made a slight movement with her chin, and unclosed, then reclenched her hands; but she said nothing.

Presently little Bessie began to cry upstairs, and Mrs. Cable ran up. It was the child's hour for supper, and she was exact to her time in demanding her bread and milk.

A third time Cable asked the question, and then Josephine slightly shook her head.

He must extract an answer from her; he must do something. She could not remain in his house without his letting her father know. He took a step towards her, and laid his hand upon her head, as he had laid it that same afternoon, and now, as then, the dark hair was wet. 'Is the head burning?' he asked.

Then she looked up at him without moving her head; her eyes were large, and had a strange far-away look in them.

'Now, Miss Cornellis, answer me—what is to be done?'

'I do not know,' she replied.

'But,' he said, 'I must be told. I must do something about this matter.'

'I leave it all to you.'

'May I take you back to the Hall? If you cannot walk, I will carry you.'

She held her head steady under his hand; she did not shake it, but said: 'No; I will not go back there. I will stay here; if you will take me in. If not, I will go back into the sea.'

'Miss Cornellis,' he said after a long silence, 'I do not understand what has happened.' Then he took away his hand from her head, which was not hot, but cold, and knelt down by the fire on one knee, and stirred up the logs, and threw on a few small sticks that crackled and blazed.

'I will not go home any more.'

'But the Hall is not your home; it belongs to Mr. Gotham.'

'I will not go home to my father again.'

'Has there been a quarrel?'

'He has been angry. I will not go near him again.'

'Did he—did he strike you?'

'Strike me?—Oh, not with his hands. I should not mind that.'

'What did he do? I must ask. You leave me to decide what is to be settled about you; and I cannot decide without knowing the circumstances.'

'I am not going back to him.'

'Did he—excuse me—drive you out of the house?'

'I left, because I could not stay.'

'Why could you not stay?'

Her fingers in her lap worked nervously; she platted and unplatted them; she twisted them on one hand, and then smoothed them with the other.

'I cannot tell you all. Would you take the lamp away? The light hurts my eyes.'

He complied with her wish, and placed the lamp in the back kitchen. Upstairs was Mrs. Cable getting the baby to sleep. Richard heard her singing:

> There's grog in the captain's cabin,
> Water down below.

He returned to the fireplace and stood against the jamb, opposite her, and said: 'Tell me everything, Miss Josephine. I am your friend. I will advise.'

'I know you are my friend,' she answered. 'I will tell you what I can; but my head spins, and I cannot think; I cannot recollect everything.' She was in no hurry; she knitted her brows, trying to recollect the chain of circumstances. Presently she said: 'It was the rector's fault; he told Aunt Judith, and she, of course, went at once to papa and told him.'

'Told what?'

'I had seen the rector this morning, and he took me to task about going on the wall to you the night of the fire.'

'It was an unwise thing.'

'You also are against me. I will say no more. Every one is turned against me. Everything I say works people up into hatred of me. I am a miserable, unhappy girl.'

'Miss Cornellis, I am not turned against you. I say what your own common-sense has told you, that you acted imprudently that night.—The rector spoke about it to Miss Judith?'

'And she, blundering, stupid old creature, went with it at once to papa. I was not in then. When he did speak to me, I saw he was angry. He does not turn red, but a greenish white, and he speaks slowly, but every word cuts like a razor; and not only so, but every word is dipped in venom, so that when it has cut you, the wound goes on festering for months, and perhaps never heals at all.'

'Your father!'—Richard spoke in slow wonder—'a father hurt, poison the blood of his child!' It was to him inconceivable. He would have allowed his flesh to be torn off his bones with red-hot hooks and pincers, rather than wound or bruise one of these tender, fragile little innocents that looked up to him in love and trust.

'My father as he speaks, when he is very angry, has a face like a dead man; but his eyes blink, and now and then he

quivers, just as though he felt an electric shock; and then he is as if he would hurt with his hands; but he controls himself again, and stabs instead with his tongue.'

Richard Cable drew a long breath, and put his hand across his chest to the mantel-shelf.

'When my papa spoke to me, I knew at once he was in one of his worst moods. And I—as I always do—was ready to fire up. I am not afraid of him; he does not cow me. He makes my heart boil and foam over.'

'Does he not take you to him, and put his arm round you, and speak low, and tell you that you have pained him, and that he loves you very, very dearly?'

'Never!' said Josephine decisively. She was recovering herself. As she thought over the scene she was describing, the heat returned to her heart and fired her veins.

'Then I acknowledged it all when he charged me; and when he sneered, I said that was not all. I told him that I had bought you the ship, given it my name, and that I should pay for it out of the insurance-money for Rose Cottage.'

'What is that?' asked Cable.

She was excited now, and went on, disregarding his interruption. 'He was trustee for my little fortune left me by my mother, and he has made away with that—how, I do not know. I did not know it was gone when I ordered the vessel. Now that it is bought, I thought I should like to pay for it, though it does not really matter, as my cousin Gotham will advance—will give me the money. Yet when my father took this line with me, I was angry and said I would claim from him some of my money out of what he would get from the insurance company. Then he stung me worse and worse; and just as a hornet will drive a horse mad, so did he make me forget everything but my pain and wrath—and I said something—about the fire——' She paused, hesitated. 'Even to you, I cannot repeat it.' She halted again. 'But I believe that what I said was true.' She stammered. 'Yet, I ought not to have said it. He is my father.' Then she drew her feet together, and put her hands on the elbows of the chair, and raised herself, and her face flamed crimson, and the very hair on her brow seemed to bristle with electric excitation, and sparks to shoot out of her eyes. 'It was then he used words to me that I shall never forget—never forgive!' She stood shivering with wrath, looking very tall in the long black dress of Mrs. Cable, and in the dark room, with the firelight

alone illumining her. 'After that, I would not stay.' She spoke slowly, and with intervals between her sentences, which came forth as the discharge of minute-guns at sea from a foundering vessel. 'I could not stay.' She shook so that she rattled the armchair which she touched with one hand. 'I had no home more.'

'But,' said Richard, 'though he angered you, he was your father, and a father——'

She did not allow him to conclude; she said harshly: 'Do you not understand? There are things which even a father may not say. As there is a blasphemy which has no forgiveness, neither in this world nor in the world to come, so is there an insult which cannot be endured nor be forgotten.' Her face was dark, and startled Cable with the rage and bitterness that was in it, lit with the glare from the fire.

'Why did you not go to the rector?' asked Richard.

'The rector!—after I had refused his son, and laughed at him?' She shook her head. 'There was no place to which I could go. Rose Cottage is burnt down. The Hall is no more a home. The rectory doors I have closed against myself. To this house I could not come.'

'Why not?'

She looked at him, then her eyes fell, and she looked into the fire. 'Because of what my father had said. There was no place for me—but the sea.' Then, unable to sustain herself longer on her feet, she sank back into the chair.

After considering a while, Richard Cable said: 'Miss Cornellis, it was God's doing that I was the means of saving you before in the lightship. It is God's doing that I have been the means of saving you this night. Therefore, what am I, to oppose His will? I will go at once to the Hall and tell Mr. Cornellis that you are here and will remain here.'

'He will insult you.'

'I am not afraid of him or of his words. And when I've told him, miss, that you are here, then I'll get out my boat and row away to the new lightship, and stay there for ten days or a fortnight.'

Then, as he moved to go, she started to her feet again, and caught his arm with both her hands, and quivering with excitement, said: 'Do not go—do not leave me helpless, friendless. I cannot bear it. There, there—I will kneel to you, if need be, and entreat you. Be Master, Captain, Pilot —everything to the "Josephine."'

He took her hand between his own, and said very gravely: 'As I said before, I say again—I'll do my duty by her, so help me God!'

Then Bessie Cable came in, and a brilliant light from the lamp she carried fell over them, hand in hand.

'And now,' said he earnestly, 'I go with a firm confidence to your father, for I have a right to speak in your defence and for you.'

But Mrs. Cable looking on, put her hand to her brow and said: 'The young cuckoo is in the nest!'

CHAPTER XIX.

THE 'WINDSTREW.'

Gabriel Gotham returned somewhat late to the Hall; he was exhausted; it was not often that he took so much exercise, and was away from his house so long; but he was pleased with himself; he chuckled and rubbed his left hand over the back of the right, which held the walking-stick. As he came in at his gates, he met Mr. Cornellis, hardly recovered from his agitation caused by the interview with his daughter.

'Where is Josephine? I want her,' said Gabriel.

'I do not know where she is. I have had a talk with her. I am incensed. I have had to reprimand her pretty sharply. She is inconsiderate, aggravating.'

'Come with me to the Platt. I must have some curaçoa or Chartreuse, or cherry-brandy. I am fagged. You look pale as well.'

The Platt was a square platform about seven feet high, built of brick, with a concreted top, to which a flight of steps led from the garden. It was said to have been originally a winnowing-floor, when wheat was grown where now lay the Hall gardens. Here, advantage was taken of the breeze from off the water to clear the corn of the husk. Such platforms still exist in different parts of England, and in the west are called 'windstrews.' They occupy a high situation, exposed to every breeze. Here, it was near the sea, because the air always stirred there, even when, at a rifle-shot inland, it was calm. This windstrew would probably have been broken

down, and the bricks used for other purposes, had not the proprietors of the Hall considered it a pleasant spot on which to sit when the weather was hot, and enjoy the cool air off the water, and see the boats coming in or going out with the tide. It went now by the name of the Platt, whatever its former designation had been, Platt being perhaps a contraction for platform. It adjoined the garden wall, and occupied an angle in it, the wall rising just high enough above the platform to serve as a back to benches. On the garden side it was unrailed. The steps ran up the side of the wall to it. At the bottom of the steps was the garden wicket-gate, almost invariably fastened.

'Where is Josephine? I want to speak to Josephine,' said Gotham again.

'I do not know where she is. She has left me in one of her tantrums. I had to speak decidedly; and she dislikes dictation: she is wayward as an unbroken filly.'

'Go into the house, Justin,' said the squire; 'tell one of the servants to bring us glasses and the liqueurs to the Platt. I cannot bear up much longer. I am too hot to go indoors. If you see Josephine, send her to me.'

Mr. Cornellis bit his lip and obeyed. He did not like being ordered about by Mr. Gotham; but he dared not show that he was annoyed. At this time he was much ruffled. His interview with his daughter had disturbed him more than he showed. He was a man who hated opposition, and above opposition, a will as strong as his own, and a mind above being humbugged. He knew that he could not delude his daughter into submission, and now he was discovering that he could not browbeat her. Accustomed to the easy natures of his sister Judith and his cousin Gotham, he was provoked at encountering opposition in his own child. He had made his plans, and these plans were disturbed by the rebelliousness of Josephine. He wanted her to marry Captain Sellwood, partly because he desired to be free from the encumbrance of his child, and partly because he could rely on Captain Sellwood not troubling him about Josephine's fortune, which he had spent. An energetic and greedy son-in-law might make matters unpleasant for him. The Sellwoods were too comfortably off to care for a small jointure, and too gentlemanly and well connected to have recourse to law, and so expose his conduct to public notice. If they found he had behaved badly, they would hush up the matter in the family

interest. His plan was, as soon as Josephine was settled, to saddle her with Judith, and himself depart, and do the best he could for himself with what money he got out of the insurance company, till Gabriel Gotham's death put him in possession of the Hanford estate. This event could not be far distant; the wretched squire was failing rapidly, and as he failed, drank more, and dosed himself with larger portions of narcotics. He was now half imbecile, and his brain would certainly soften, and paralysis ensue very speedily. For a while, Mr. Cornellis had been uneasy because Gabriel would speak of the past, and revert, especially in his maudlin moods, to the wrong he had done to Bessie and her son.

'Pshaw!' said Cornellis. 'If every one of us took to heart the faults of his youth, as you do, none of us would come to grey hairs. Your father and uncle made the woman a good offer; she refused it, and with that the matter came to an end. You are quit.'

But this did not wholly satisfy Gabriel. The recollection of his treachery haunted him, and he took to liqueur-drinking and opiates, as much to still the voice of self-reproach as to lull the nervous pains he felt.

If Bessie Cable had not lived in the same place, it would have been better for him. The occasional sight of her and of her son renewed in him the stings of conscience. But though he felt these stings, he was too cowardly and weak to redress the old wrong.

Bessie had stood in the way of his marrying. At one time, he had visited a neighbouring squire and paid attention to his daughter—one of his daughters; and because the Squire had five sons and six daughters, and his estate was heavily burdened, he would have been glad to dispose of one of the girls to the owner of Hanford. Miss Wakeham also, knowing herself to be slenderly provided for, would have accepted him. Gabriel rode over twice a week to Woodley Park, and walked and flirted with Miss Wakeham; but just as everyone supposed he was about to declare himself, Bessie Cable reappeared in Hanford, and Gotham became frightened. He expected that she would repeat the story of his conduct to her, if he proceeded: and he hung back, ceased to visit Woodley, and remained an old bachelor.

Would Bessie have interfered? He never knew. She, perhaps, herself was undecided how to act. But he resolved not to risk the unpleasantness such a disclosure would cause.

He was certain that the Wakehams would refuse the connection, if it came to their ears; they were a somewhat pinched, but a proud family.

The conduct of Gabriel to Miss Fanny Wakeham was commented on, and was the occasion of some coldness between the Wakehams and him; but when she, after a twelvemonth, married a Baronet, and became Lady Brentwood, this coldness disappeared; the Wakehams were even grateful to Mr. Gotham that he had withdrawn his pretensions. The vanity of the man was enhanced by the marriage of Miss Fanny, and he liked to boast to Cornellis and other intimates, of his old flame, Lady Brentwood, by whom, by George! he was nearly caught; but hearing that she had a deuce of a temper, he had been wise enough to cry 'Hands off.'

Justin Cornellis had gained his power over Gabriel Gotham at first by his knowledge of the secret which embittered the life of the latter. He knew it, because it was a family secret; consequently, Judith also knew about it. But Cornellis did not know that there was a son, and that mother and son lived in Hanford, till he came there and took and inhabited Rose Cottage. When the Cornellis family came to Hanford, Gotham was disturbed in mind lest the story should get out by their indiscretion. He was just then desirous of being being made a Deputy Lieutenant for the county, and a Justice of Peace; and he knew that it would be fatal to his chance, were the scandal to get wind; so he cringed to Cornellis, and offered him a loan of money, were he in want of temporary accommodation, as many a man is when buying a house and fitting it up. Cornellis soon got the upper hand of the squire, and maintained such a hold on him, that, as Justin supposed, Gotham was unable to act in any way without him. He did not refrain from jesting about the boatman's lass Bessie, the very old girl who had taken advantage of the inexperience of the young squire; and to sneer at the lout of a son, and his marriage with the servant from the rectory. Cornellis did not see that he was overshooting his mark. His contemptuous jests about the Cables recoiled on and hurt Gotham. If Bessie were such a despicable creature, what a fool Gabriel himself must have been to take up with her; if the son were such a booby, the father must have been a poor creature. Gotham did not like the jokes of Cornellis; they galled him, and wrought in him great bitterness against his cousin; and sometimes, when he was alone, it boiled up, and

he clenched his fists and gnashed his teeth at the thought of the man who had become indispensable to him, but whom he hated. Cornellis did not consider that a weak man is a man on whom you can never lean; he is always devising some meanness whereby he can deceive those upon whom he fawns and to whom he clings. In playing a game with a stupid man, the faculties become lulled; we think we know exactly what moves he will make, and we are beforehand ready to countermove. But it sometimes happens that stupidity simulates genius, because it sinks to depths beyond calculation, and surprises us by a step for which we were quite unprepared. Mr. Cornellis over-estimated his own power, and undervalued the parts of the squire. He had no suspicion that Gabriel regarded him with mistrust.

Mr. Gotham seated himself on the seat, with his back to the wall, on the raised windstrew, took off his hat, and removing slowly his handkerchief from his pocket, wiped his head with a shaking hand. His weak eyes were watering, his narrow forehead was covered with moisture. The evening was warm, and he was tired. He looked about him, at his pretty garden and groves and terraces. What a pretty place it was! Yet he hardly enjoyed it. He had a conservatory, and bought for it rare plants, not that he cared for them, but that he might boast of the sum he had paid for this new orchid or that rare lily. He had a good stable, two hunters; but he rarely rode them, never hunted with them; all the pleasure he had from them was to talk about them and what they cost him. Some of his neighbours humoured him, but laughed at him in their sleeves. They humoured him for the sake of his subscriptions to the hunt and the balls, and because he gave good dinners. He was mean in some things, extravagant in others, as often happens with weak men.

Now, as he looked about him, he felt uncomfortable. The idea glimmered in his cloudy mind that he must before very long leave this pretty place, his greenhouses, his pines, his hunters, his cellars, his china. All would pass from him to another. He could see the church tower behind the trees. His walled garden adjoined the graveyard, and was believed to have been taken out of it; certainly, bones were dug up on the north side of it; but the strawberries along that bed were splendid. 'I wish the Chartreuse would come,' he grumbled. 'What is that fellow Justin about?—So; he has been talking of the changes he will make when I am dead, calculating on

the improvements he will effect. My grapes—my muscatel house; I have been particular to have the muscat vines all together; you can't have the proper flavour where they are mixed. He'll be eating my pines when the worms are eating me! Shall he—shall he!' He uttered these last words aloud.

'Shall he!—Shall who?' asked Cornellis, ascending the steps, and taking his place on the other seat, at right angles to that occupied by Gotham. He had his back to the sea. He asked the question with indifference; he had no idea that it concerned himself.

'I—I have been unwell to-day; I have been thinking that my health is breaking up.'

'Pshaw! You are in low spirits. Breaking up! when you have been trotting about all the afternoon like a boy of sixteen. It is I, not you, who have cause to be in the dumps. I have been irritated past endurance by that daughter of mine.—Thank you, I will have green Chartreuse.'

'What has she been doing?'

'Doing! Will you believe it? She has refused Captain Sellwood!'

Mr. Gotham's mouth opened, and he stared at Cornellis with feeble astonishment, mixed with amusement.

Cornellis remarked the latter, and said somewhat testily: 'There is nothing so funny about this. To me it is indescribably mortifying. He will have eventually fifteen thousand.'

'And she has, from her mother, about five hundred pounds in all,' said Gotham with a chuckle.

'Not so much; no—hardly four.'

'You have been very careful of it,' said Gabriel, crouching with his hands on his stick. His glass of Chartreuse was so full, and his hands so shaking, that he did not venture to raise the glass to his lips; he stooped to the table and put his mouth to the glass and sucked the brimming contents. He looked so mean and wretched as thus bent, with his blear eyes on Cornellis, that the latter had difficulty in checking the expression of contempt that began to curl his lips.

'Yes,' he answered; 'I have been a careful trustee.'

'So Josephine told me,' said Gabriel.

Mr. Cornellis started, and the colour went out of his brow, which turned deadly white. The movement was so sudden that Gabriel was frightened, and upset the glass with his nose or chin.

'There!' said he; 'I have spilt my glass before I have

half drunk it. It cost me twelve shillings a bottle, and a bottle don't hold much; it is soon gone.'

Mr. Cornellis considered whether he should ask what Josephine had said. He thought it best not to pursue the subject.

'Pour me out a little more,' said Gotham; 'my hand is unsteady.'

Whilst Mr. Cornellis complied, Gabriel said to him: 'So, Josephine has refused Captain Sellwood.'

'She told me so herself. It is monstrous!'

'There must be a prior attachment.'

Now the hand of Justin Cornellis shook, and he spilled some drops on the little table. 'Prior attachment! Of course not. To whom could she be attached? Pooh! It is absurd.'

'What was that I heard about a meeting on the night of the fire?'

'Meeting! I know nothing about one.'

'Do you know what I have been doing to-day, Justin?'

'No, squire.'

'I have been to Grimes and Newbold's dock, to see the vessel Josephine has bought, called after her name, and given to Richard.'

'Josephine cannot buy a boat. She has not the money; and I will see her at Jericho before I advance the requisite sum.'

'I have advanced it, Justin. You—you can repay me at your leisure out of Josephine's money.'

'You!' Mr. Cornellis looked at him with astonishment. This mean little man had meddled to make mischief. 'Do you know what you have done?'

'I think I do know,' chuckled Gotham.

'I think you do not,' said Cornellis angrily. His face was becoming pale, and the lines in it hard, as if cut with a gouge in stone. 'I do not think you are aware that you have compromised my daughter's character. It was bad enough that she was on the lightship alone with that fellow; but this is worse. She gives him a vessel which she calls after her own name, and you help her, you encourage her to do so.'

'Why should she not?'

'I say, because she makes the tongues wag about her. Ever since that confounded affair of the lightship, she has been running in and out of the man's cottage.'

'And,' said Gabriel, 'she has met him at night on the seawall.'

'People will talk. There will be plenty of scandal floating. And do you expect me to put up with it?'

'Let them talk. Something may come of it that would please me well.'

'What is that, Gabriel?' Mr. Cornellis's cheeks blanched, and his hands closed. He was very angry.

'Why should she not take him?' said Gabriel. 'She likes him well; of that I am sure, and that would satisfy me.'

'It would not suit me,' said Cornellis in a husky voice.

'It would suit me excellently, Justin, as you may see, for then I could leave what little I have to Josephine, and so Richard would get it. That would be a great satisfaction to my conscience, and—do not look at me in that strange way; I do not like it, Justin—I say it would just fit in with my wishes; no one would know who he was, and my conscience would be clear.'

'Is that what you intend!' exclaimed Cornellis, starting up, and leaning forward, his face livid, his lips drawn back, showing his white teeth. 'Is that it?—That you shall never do!'

Gotham staggered to his feet also, and shrank back; he was frightened at the ghastly face and malignant expression of Justin Cornellis.

'You dare to utter this to me!' said the ex-missionary, and with his elbows drawn back. He took a step towards Gotham. 'I'll throttle you first.'

Gotham, trembling, let fall his glass of Chartreuse, and backed before the angry father, who suddenly thrust forth both his hands to grip him.

At that moment, up the steps of the windstrew came Richard Cable.

Gabriel Gotham uttered a feeble cry, whether of terror at the approach of Cornellis, or of surprise at the apparition of Cable, neither knew, and in a moment he fell headlong from the Platt upon the garden walk below.

CHAPTER XX.

THE FLOWERING OF FORGIVENESS.

JOSEPHINE was still before the fire in the cottage when Richard Cable returned. He came in quietly. Though a solidly built man, he walked lightly, and his step as he entered the kitchen was so little audible that Josephine did not hear it. She was busied in her own thoughts.

But Mrs. Cable saw and heard her son, and at once perceived that something had happened. 'What is it?' she asked; but Richard, instead of answering her, went to the fireplace, took Josephine by the hand, and raised her.

'Look at me, miss,' he said. 'You have given me a right to exercise some sort of authority over you, for you have thrown yourself on my protection and chosen me as your adviser. I give you my opinion now, and tell you what I wish you to do, what I am sure you ought to do.'

She looked steadily into his face. He was very grave, even pale. She also saw that something had happened.

'There has been an accident at the Hall. You must return to it at once.'

Her lips began to move in protest, and a flicker came into her eyes of reviving opposition.

'Listen to me, Miss Josephine. I would not advise this unless I were sure it was right. It is right all round—right for yourself, right for your father, right for your poor cousin, right for me.'

'My cousin?'

'There has been an accident. When I came to the garden gate, I found it unhasped, and——'

'Yes; I came out that way, and may not have fastened it behind me.'

'And as I heard your father's voice close by I opened the gate and went in. I did not wish to see him in the house; I preferred meeting him in the garden.'

'I can understand that,' said Josephine. 'Was he alone?'

'No; he was on that raised place at the bottom of the garden, once used, they say, for winnowing corn.'

'Yes, the Platt.'

'He was there with Mr. Gotham.'

Mrs. Cable drew near, a great fear rising in her heart.

'I came up the steps. I do not quite know what happened. It seemed to me that there was an altercation going on; but I cannot say. I came in quickly through the gate and up the steps, and did not listen to what they were saying, nor see them till I was right on them. Mr. Cornellis was leaning forward with his hand toward Mr. Gotham, who stood inwards, so to speak, with his back to the garden, where there is no wall; and I cannot say how it came about, whether he was surprised at my sudden appearance, or whether he lost his balance stepping back from Mr. Cornellis. I say, I cannot tell how it came about, but he fell backwards off the Platt, headlong into the garden.'

Bessie Cable uttered a cry, and stood with her eyes distended with terror, looking at her son, her hands clenched, her arms stiff, stretched out at her sides.

'Mr. Cornellis and I ran down to his aid at once. I raised him in my arms. He was not conscious. I sent your father to the house, and when help came he was removed to his bedroom, and the doctor sent for.'

'Cousin Gabriel!' exclaimed Josephine, the tears rising in her eyes. 'O poor Cousin Gabriel! What did the doctor say?'

'I did not wait to hear.'

'Is he—very seriously hurt?'

'I fear so. He did not speak. The gardener has pots and other things in the corner where he fell, and I am afraid he struck his head on some hard substance. He was not conscious. He did not know that he was being moved, and I suspect his spine is also injured.'

'You think he will die!' cried Josephine in terror. She had not realised at first the seriousness of the accident.

'I do not doubt it.'

Josephine stood in hesitation. She put her knuckles to her lips. 'What am I to do? What ought I to do?'

'I have told you,' said Richard Cable. 'You must go to the Hall.'

Then Mrs. Cable closed her strong hand about Josephine's wrist; she did not speak, but she drew her with her. She did not wait to put anything over her head; she went forth as she was, and Josephine unresistingly went with her.

The house was in commotion. Aunt Judith was useless. She had retired to her own room and rang for sherry, as she

felt faint. The servants had lost their heads, and were ordering each other about to do impossible or useless things. No one attended to Miss Judith's bell, which rang violently every few minutes.

Mrs. Cable and Josephine entered unnoticed, and proceeded at once to the room where the unfortunate man lay. As they entered, Mr. Cornellis, who was there, started. He had been overhauling Gotham's secrétaire. He knew the will was there; but he wished to satisfy himself that it had not been destroyed. It was there, with the date on the envelope when it was made.

Gabriel Gotham had not been undressed; he lay on the bed just as he had been placed there, and his condition remained unaltered. His eyes were dull, like those of a man drunk with sleep, and his breathing was stertorous. There was certainly pressure on the brain. The pillow was stained with blood that flowed from a wound in the back of his head.

Mr. Cornellis took no notice of his daughter. He had not the smallest suspicion that she had attempted her life and been saved by Cable. He looked hard at her dress—she was in a gown of Mrs. Cable's that did not fit her—but he asked no question. He supposed his daughter had been playing some new vagary, which did not greatly concern him, and about which he need not inquire. He said to Bessie Cable: 'Your son startled Mr. Gotham. He came in on him unexpectedly. Why Mr. Gotham should have been so surprised by seeing him I cannot tell; he sprang back as if he had seen a ghost, and though I put out my hand to save him, I was too late: he fell off the windstrew, and I fear has met with a fatal injury.—What do you want?' This was addressed to a servant-girl who hovered at the bedroom door with a frightened face.

'Please, sir,' said the girl, 'do you know where the key of the cellarette is? Miss Cornellis seed the master being took upstairs, and it has upset her so bad that she wants some sherry, and we don't know where the key is.'

'It is in your master's pocket,' said Mr. Cornellis. 'She must wait till it can be taken from him—till he is undressed.'

Steps were heard on the stairs. The surgeon had come.

'I have not ventured to have him touched till you could see him,' said Mr. Cornellis to the medical man. 'Poor fellow! poor fellow!' He was agitated; his voice shook, he turned his face away that his emotion might not be seen. 'The whole thing was done so suddenly. It is a fearful

shock to us all.' Then he repeated the account of how Gabriel fell, as he had given it to Bessie, only adding, whilst his eye was fixed on her: 'Why he started was no doubt this—he was astonished at the intrusion. My cousin was very tenacious of his privacy. How the man got in, I do not know.'

'By the gate,' said Josephine. 'I left it open.'

'Or what he wanted, I cannot conjecture,' added Mr. Cornellis.

'I cannot examine him till he is undressed,' said the surgeon. 'We must have a nurse.'

'I am here,' said Bessie. 'Let Mr. and Miss Cornellis leave the room.'

The ex-missionary hesitated a moment, and then complied. As he went through the door, he saw the maid again, who asked: 'Please, sir, have you got the key?'

'Key. What key?'

'Please, sir, Miss Cornellis has the hysterics for want of sherry. There goes her bell again.'

'Bother her sherry! Stand out of the way.'

Half an hour later, Mr. Cornellis was summoned.

The surgeon was a plain blunt man. 'I've overhauled him,' he said. 'It is of no use giving you false hopes. He can live only a few hours.'

Mr. Cornellis nodded; he was sure of this before the doctor came.

'Can you stay?' he asked.

'I will call again later. I can do no good. If I could I would stay.—Let Mrs. Cable remain with him; he must not be left alone.' Then he gave a few perfunctory directions and departed.

Cornellis looked at Bessie Cable with a sarcastic smile: 'Too late, my good woman.'

'Too late for what?' she asked, turning slowly, haughtily towards him. Poor and ignorant woman though she was, she had a certain stateliness in all her actions, a dignity in all she did.

'Merely, dear Mrs. Cable, that you are too late to get anything from him. He will not recover consciousness.'

'Too late to get?' she asked gravely, raising her tall form and looking coldly at the ex-missionary. 'To get what? I want nothing of him.'

'O no, my good woman; of course not. I know your story. You might, had you been in time, have secured some-

thing; but—you are too late. He will never move hand or tongue again.'

'I—*I* take anything of him? *I* ask anything of him?' She shook her head. 'You may know my story, but you do not know me. I came, not to get, but to give.'

'To give what?'

'What you would neither understand nor value. Leave me alone with him.'

He did not care to remain. He went over to the secrétaire, locked it, and took away the key.

'You will call me if he is worse, if there is any change,' he said in a tone of indifference. He did not care to keep up appearances before Bessie Cable, who could injure or benefit him in no way. She slightly bowed her head. Then, twirling the key on his forefinger, he went out.

'Please, sir,' said the maid, 'is that the key? Miss Cornellis has pulled down the bellrope; she do want her sherry—awful!'

When Bessie Cable was alone in the room with Gabriel Gotham, she took the lamp, and with steady hand carried it to the bedside and held it up, that the light might fall full on him. He lay before her a poor broken wretch, with a bandage round his head, the back of which was crushed in, and with an injured spine. Had the skull alone been fractured, the surgeon would have operated; with the broken spine it was useless. His eyelids were half closed; the glitter of the white of the eyes could be seen beneath them. His breathing was noisy, showing pressure on the brain. The weak mouth was half open, showing the teeth. There was no beauty, no nobility in the face, nothing to attract love.

Bessie had not so steadily and for long looked at him since he had betrayed and left her. Now, as she studied him, in the bright circle of light cast by the lamp, she thought how wonderful it was that after their long separation, she should be with him again, that he should be without a loving hand to smooth his pillow, a tearful eye to watch for his last breath.

In that very room, many, many years ago, she had watched him when he was ill with scarlet fever. Then she had insisted on being his nurse, and she had attended him faithfully, till she herself took the fever. When she was ill, he did not come near her in the lodge.

She looked round the room. Old times came back. She

tried to trace the features of the sick boy, laid on that same bed, in the face of the dying man. The face was much changed, and yet it was the same: the face is the hieroglyph of the soul, the picture that gives expression to the idea. Here, all through life had been a cowardly, selfish, ignoble mind; and it had written its characters in every line and curve of the commonplace face.

As Bessie looked at him, her eyes were dry, a sternness was in them, and her brows were set as were her lips. When she knew he was injured and dying, she went to him. Who had such a right as she? In the time of his prosperity, she kept away; but when he was cast down and broken, she came to him, as was natural.

As she stood, considering his face, her mind ranged over the time they were together, their childhood, the protection she had extended to the feeble lad, and the love and pity, the love that had sprung out of the pity wherewith she had regarded him. She had loved him. She had loved none but him, and it seemed strange to herself now that this could have been.

Then she thought of the short happiness of their married life, and then the agony of her disenchantment. Now the hand that held the lamp began to tremble, and the lights and shadows about the sick man's face to dance; her hand trembled with wrath at the recollection of the injustice done her—done her by this man, lying before her.

The hand of God had sought and found him, and punished him. She believed Cornellis's story. What more probable than that the sudden apparition of his son should make Gabriel Gotham spring back, oblivious of the gap behind him? Could he have seen him appear and remain seated, unmoved? Her heart was filled with conflicting emotions—wrath at her wrong, pity for his condition.

'That is true which I said to him,' she muttered; 'the plant Forgiveness is hard to strike, and difficult to get to flower.'

He had embittered, he had ruined her whole life. She who had been so strong and confident, had lost her hope in life after her betrayal. Without any fault of her own, her character had been blasted; and a stain rested on her son. She had scarce mentioned his father to Richard, and Richard had refrained from asking about him. He feared to know all. She was a dishonoured woman in the eyes of her son; this

wretched man on the bed had put a barrier of suspicion between her son and her. Richard could not regard her with that holy reverence that a son should have for a mother whose name is without a spot.

She had had a hard battle to fight for some years to maintain herself and her child, too proud to accept assistance from the Gotham family. She, who might have been an honest man's wife, ruling her house, surrounded by her children, had been for long alone, poor, unhappy. Indeed, she had a great debt of wrong written up in her heart against this man she was now looking on.

In physics, all forces are correlated; heat and light are but different phases of the same force, which manifests itself now in one way, then in another; and heat translates itself into light, and light relapses into mere heat. It is the same in psychics. The various passions are correlated, various manifestations of the same energy. Love becomes momentarily hate, but then sometimes as momentarily reverts to love.

For nearly forty years Bessie Cable had nursed her wrongs, and had eaten out her heart with rage and gall; and now, as she looked at the cause of all her misery, the bitterness rose up and overflowed her soul; but at the same moment, Gabriel opened his eyes; for one brief instant they seemed to gather consciousness, and he muttered, 'Bessie!'

In a minute, all the hate, the wrath, were gone. In a minute, love, pity, sweetness, gushed hot and strong through her heart. It is said that the Amazon is sometimes checked by belts of weed that form across the river, and weave into a vegetable felt, upwards, downwards, athwart, and in and out, making a dense impenetrable barrier; and the mighty stream, the main artery of a continent, is arrested, and thrown back to inundate vast tracts of land. Then, all at once it breaks its chain of green, and the mighty volume sweeps along its proper channel, carrying with it, in fragments rolled over and torn to sheds, the weedy belt. So is it with the human heart, so was it now with that of gray-haired Bessie Cable. Everything was forgotten—the wrongs, resentment, privations, heartaches, the woven and interlaced hedge of stubborn pride—all went down and went away in a moment, and the great natural artery of Love burst and poured forth and suffused the poor wretch on his deathbed—a creature as unconscious now of what he received as he had ever been incapable of valuing that precious flood.

Wondrous is the generosity, the power of forgiveness in the human heart! Mercy, says Shakespeare, droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the earth beneath; but forgiveness wells up from the deeps of the heart itself. It may be stamped down, and choked and overpaved, till it seems that it is no more there; and yet at last, at an unconsidered moment, it breaks forth, it dissolves the hardest crust, and flows in newness, all-embracingness, purifying and refreshing.

Bessie was on her knees by the bed, and the tears rolled down her aged cheeks. She held the hand that had been given her once, and been withdrawn from her. She looked longingly at the dull eyes that had recognised her for a moment, listened to hear again her name coupled with a word of love from the lips that had spoken.

The house was still that night. The servants had gone to bed. Mr. Cornellis was in his own room; he was satisfied. In an hour or two the inheritance would be his, and his embarrassments at an end. Miss Judith was quiet; she had got her sherry.

Bessie was glad that she was undisturbed, that she was left alone with Gabriel that night when he passed away—but did not pass till the plant Forgiveness had flowered, and been laid on his dead heart.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PILOT.

The funeral of Mr. Gabriel Gotham, J.P.—he never gained the distinction of D.L.—was fairly well attended. The coffin was preceded by a detachment of police, walking two and two, wearing white gloves; and was followed by the Cornellis family and by several of the gentry of the neighbourhood. The coffin was of polished oak, with brass mountings. The church bell tolled; and the pulpit and altar and the family pew were in mourning. It was a funeral so flattering to the vanity of the dead man, that the wonder was he didn't rub his hands in his coffin and cackle a pleased laugh!

After the funeral, a few came back to the Hall to partake of refreshments whilst their carriages were being got ready.

The rector speedily took off his surplice and scarf and curled up his black kid gloves, and came. The lawyer of the deceased was also there, a local man, who lived in Hanford, who made out the leases for Mr. Gotham.

When the guests from a distance were gone, and only the rector and the solicitor remained, Justin Cornellis said with a sad smile: 'It is, I suppose, usual on these melancholy occasions to produce and read the will; but Mr. Coxe no doubt is aware of the arrangement made by my poor cousin. I have the key of his bureau. The will is in it, I believe. I will run upstairs and bring it down, if Mr. Coxe would like to see it. There is, however, no necessity; I will have it proved forthwith at Somerset House.'

'I have it, sir,' said the lawyer.

'You have it!' exclaimed Mr. Cornellis, stopping short on his way to the door.

'Mr. Gotham made his will at my office the day he met with his fatal accident; in fact, only a few hours before perhaps not more than an hour and a half previous.'

'I beg your pardon! Is this possible? With what object?' Mr. Cornellis looked very blank.

'Well, sir, I suppose he changed his mind. I have the will here. It is short and to the point. The rector and my clerk witnessed it.'

'I came down to the beach,' said the rector, 'when poor Gotham was there with Miss Josephine inspecting a new vessel just built by Grimes; and he, poor fellow, asked me to do him the favour of stepping with him to the office of his solicitor. It turned out that he wanted to make his will, and get me to attest it. I suppose he felt unwell that day; had some premonition of what would happen. I suspect the true explanation of his fall is that he had a stroke, and that is what made him lose his balance. It was an odd coincidence his making a will the same day he lost his faculties.'

'Let me look at it,' said Cornellis, huskily.

'Nothing can be simpler,' said the lawyer Coxe. 'He has left everything to your daughter, Miss Josephine—that is, to the rector, myself and Mr. Cable, in trust for her, till she is of age, and not under coverture.—I must ask that Miss Cornellis may be present whilst I read the will, as it concerns her more than any one else.'

'And—myself?' stammered the ex-missionary.

'There is a hundred pounds apiece left to me, sir, to the

rector, and Cable, as executors; to the servants, a small remembrance. That is all. You are not mentioned.'

Mr. Cornellis said no more. He rang the bell for his daughter. He remained silent whilst the will was being read.

The rector and the solicitor left, and then he was alone with Josephine. The calmness he had assumed during the presence of the two gentlemen deserted him. He became limp in body and haggard in face. His usual assurance and self-confidence were gone, knocked down by this unexpected blow, and he did not know what line to take. He felt that his position was critical. The object of the wretched old squire was clear to him. Mr. Gotham had made Josephine his heiress because he believed she would marry Richard Cable; and he had so entangled her with Cable, that it would not be easy for her to break away without a slur remaining on her character. This was why he had advanced the money for the purchase of the boat, why he had had it called the 'Josephine'; and made the girl give it to Cable. This also was why he had made him trustee with the rector and Coxe.

He was no hero to his daughter; he had contemptuously flung away his natural opportunities of gaining her respect and securing her love; and now he regretted this mistake, because he was disappointed of his ambition and made dependent on her. He had wasted all the money his wife had brought; nothing of it remained, except what he could secure from the Insurance Company, in compensation for his house and goods consumed by fire.

'Well, Josephine,' he said, not looking her in the face, 'luck smiles on you, and turns her back on me. Look at poor Gotham's old will. By it, everything fell to me; and now, at the last moment, when he was half-crazed, he went and made a fresh disposition of the property. I might contest the new will; indeed, I have a mind to serve a *caveat* against its being proved, till I have considered the matter. The new will is so preposterous that it cannot stand. Poor fellow! He was off his head when he made it. But it will not do to have quarrels in families. It would be a scandal if you and I were ranged against one another in court; and I propose a compromise.'

'I think, papa, you had better settle that with the trustees —Mr. Sellwood and Mr. Coxe and Richard Cable.'

He frowned. 'I can have nothing to do with Mr. Sellwood, nor you either, since you have refused his son! No, Josephine; I speak as a father to a child. I want no law; I want a fair arrangement between us. If you satisfy me, I will withdraw my opposition to the will.'

'I do not know what the property of poor Cousin Gabriel is worth,' said Josephine.

'About two thousand five hundred gross; but nett, nothing like that sum.'

'Papa, I will talk the matter over with Richard——'

'Richard!' he exclaimed. 'What the deuce do you mean?'

'Richard Cable,' answered Josephine. 'I have put myself in his hands. I did so when I thought myself a poor girl; now I am rich, I cannot twist myself out of his hands.'

'Oh, as to that,' said her father, 'give yourself no concern; I'll manage it. What was absurd yesterday is impossible now.'

'I did not mean that I could not extricate myself, papa, but that I would not.'

'Then you are a fool,' said he bluntly—'a greater fool than I conceived you to be. The man is a vulgar sailor, talks broad Essex, and blows his nose with his fingers.'

'I beg your pardon, papa. He is a man of honour and integrity—a gentleman at heart.'

'I do not profess to know his heart. If his gentility is within, turn him inside out, please, before presenting him to me and the world.' He laughed contemptuously. 'I suppose your mother-in-law will char for you—ninepence a day with six meals and her beer.'

Josephine coloured.

'As for the snivelling babies,' he said scornfully—'insist on a free application of soap, and the use of a tooth-comb before introducing them into this house.' Then, impatiently: 'Pshaw! The thing is too absurd. I cannot believe in such a climax of folly as that my own daughter should voluntarily set herself up to be the laughing-stock of the neighbourhood. I'll offer the lout a hundred pounds to marry Betty the scullery-maid, and get rid of him that way.'

'Papa,' said Josephine, with a troubled face, 'you cannot alter matters by talking in that way. You drove me mad the other day, and I tried to drown myself; then Richard saved me for the second time from death. I had no one to

'hom to look for succour, advice, comfort, and I turned to im.'

'There—there!' said Mr. Cornellis. 'Like a Newfound-and dog, I suppose, he went into the water after you. It oes not follow that because a dog draws you out of the water, ou are to worship and obey Ponto ever after; a pat and a one will suffice for him. My dear Josephine, it is only in he fairy tale that Beauty, when she marries the Beast, finds im transform himself into a glittering Prince. In real life, 'hen Beauty thus descends, she finds the Beast become nfinitely and degradingly more beastly.' Then, unable to eep his temper any longer under semblance of control, he eft the room, took up his hat, and walked through the garden, ut at the gate, and along the seawall to the Cables' cottage. Ie walked in, after having rapped at the door, with his hat on, nd asked Mrs. Cable for her son. She told him he was in he garden, and he went through the house to him.

'Good evening,' he said, a little roughly, for his temper vas nettled. 'I've come for a word or two with you.—Vhat is this Miss Josephine tells me about her trying to rown herself, and throwing herself on your protection?'

Richard stood up, and looked Mr. Cornellis in the face ravely out of his clear steady eyes. 'Has she told you ught about it, sir?' he asked.

'Yes, she has—some rodomontade. I beg your pardon; ou probably do not understand the word, and would be at a oss to spell it. Some nonsense, I mean. She tumbled into he mud, and you picked her out.'

'Sir, it happened as Miss Josephine said.'

'She entered into no particulars. She was in one of her all moods, giving herself tiptoe airs. I do not care for the articulars. How she got into the mud is nought to me; how he got out is more my concern. Did she scramble out, or id you pull her out?'

'I brought her here, sir. She was in the water, not in he mud.'

'You brought her here! Why not to her home?'

'Because she refused to be taken home.'

'And then she threw herself on you for advice and pro-ection—advice as to nothing, protection against nobody. Not a soul desired to hurt her, and it is a matter of no im-ortance what and who advised her, for she is so headstrong hat she will go only her own way.'

'What she asked me, sir,' said the sailor, 'and what was said, are between herself and me.'

'You refuse to tell me what passed?'

'Miss Josephine spoke to me in confidence!'

There was something so offensive and irritating in the tone of Mr. Cornellis, that Richard began to see how it was possible for the poor girl to be worked into a condition of exasperation by her father, such that she should try to destroy herself.

The ex-missionary looked hard at the sailor, who met his eye frankly.

'I do not know what tomfoolery my daughter has been playing with you, but you will please to understand that whatever she said, she said in joke.'

'Miss Josephine knows that best, sir. If she spoke in joke—so; if in earnest—so.' He was not to be brow-beaten; he was calm, grave, and earnest.

'I do not know how she expressed herself; words are various in their meanings, and a simple word lightly said may be taken seriously, and have grave consequences. You must distinctly understand, my man, that Miss Cornellis has acted contrary to my wishes in coming here to play with your brats—children. There are children to be played with on her own level of life, without stooping to yours.—I mean no offence. Your children may be very nice and dear and all that sort of thing, but they are as apart from the sphere in which my daughter moves as if they belonged to the Dog-star.'

'The stars are above,' said Cable coolly.

Mr. Cornellis was beating about the bush. He did not want to admit that his daughter had spoken seriously to him about an engagement with Cable; he desired to hear Cable's version of the interview, and then to take his course. But Richard was reserved. Mr. Justin Cornellis could get nothing out of him, and was himself losing his temper.

'Now, look here,' said he. 'My daughter has made you a present of a boat. I advanced the money. She gave it to you. I thought it would seem to come more gracefully from her; but don't you build any ambitions on that transaction. She owed you a debt, and has paid it; and she is now quit. I daresay she has said some nonsense to you since. Girls have no control over their fancies and tongues.—Mind you, my good fellow, I object to her coming here. If she returns

she will incur my severe displeasure; and I warn you that no serious intention lurks behind her words.'

'What words, sir?'

'Any words she may have said.'

Cable considered a moment, then he said with self-restraint: 'Sir, I have listened to what you have said; but I can't make much out of it. You don't wish the young lady to come here to see my kids; very well, sir. She shall not come if I can help it. I would not have one of my little girls disobey me; and if I led your daughter into disobedience, I should expect to be punished in like manner in my own children.—But, sir, Miss Josephine spoke to me when she was much in earnest and was very unhappy. I know well we be of different build. She's a clipper yacht, and I a coal-barge; but that is neither here nor there. She appealed to me, and I answered her. If she meant nought by it, I am content. I will go with you to the Hall, sir, and see her in your presence, and she shall tell me what she means. Which-ever way she decides, I am content.'

As the two men turned to leave the garden by the way of the bridge, Josephine herself appeared from under the willows, crossed the plank, opened the wicket, and came towards them.

'I knew papa had come here,' she said; 'so I have followed.'

'I am glad you are on the spot,' said Mr. Cornellis—but his looks belied his words—'that you may hear what I have been saying to Mr. Cable. I have told him that you have used random words to him, the purport of which I know, though I do not know the exact expressions used. You were excited at the time, possibly light-headed. Your words are not to be taken at the foot of the letter. What you said in heat you regret in cool. A lady is always allowed to change her mind; and circumstances having altered, you have altered your purpose.—You will understand, Mr. Cable, that the girl is not of age.'

'Papa,' said Josephine, turning to him, and then to Cable, 'Richard—I can now say to both what must be said. I am not a weathercock. When I give my word I stick to it. I put myself in the hands of Richard Cable, and asked him to direct the course of my life, when I felt that I had lost confidence in you, papa—in every one; when I believed myself to be a poor girl without a penny. Mr. Cable does not know what has happened to alter my circumstances; that, however, does not alter my purpose, but intensifies my resolution. If

before, when I was poor and without responsibilities, I wanted a help, now that I am well off, and am likely to have many responsibilities, I shall need assistance much more. He is the only man to whom I can look with perfect trust, and to him I still turn. I do not wish to reproach you, papa; but as you have mismanaged my little fortune left me by my mother, I do not wish you to play ducks and drakes with that bequeathed to me by my cousin. Besides, he did not appoint you executor and trustee, but he appointed Richard Cable. There is no one—no one to whom I can look up as I look up to him. I daresay my choice will shock the neighbourhood; but I do not care; I must seek my own happiness and welfare above everything else. When a poor creature is drowning, she clings to the spar that is floating near her, and which she knows will sustain her, and does not apologise to the hencoops and empty barrels drifting around that she does not lay hold of them instead of the spar.'

Mr. Cornellis turned livid. 'Take care, Josephine; you almost persuade me that a lunatic asylum is your proper home.'

'I ask Richard Cable to protect me. He will see that I am not spirited away to a madhouse.—I am sorry,' she continued, 'very sorry, not at all glad, that Cousin Gotham has made me his heiress. I had ten thousand times rather have been a poor man's wife, in such a position that the road of duty was straight and clear before me. Now I fear my way will be less obvious; but I shall have one to steer me who is the best of pilots.' She extended her hand to Richard.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOME!

As Josephine had made up her mind, and neither her father nor her aunt could move her to alter it, and the rector, from motives of delicacy, forbore giving his advice, the marriage was hurried on, and took place within three months of the funeral of Gabriel Gotham. As it must be, argued Mr. Cornellis, the sooner it was over the better. To the great astonishment of the neighbourhood, Josephine was married almost as soon as gossip got wind that she purposed marriage.

No sooner was she married, than she departed with her husband in the new boat, the 'Josephine,' for a cruise to Holland and Heligoland and the Danish coast.

The neighbourhood was in some commotion, and consulted what was to be done. Such a case had not occurred before. Miss Cornellis was a lady; Richard Cable, a common man. It was true that not much was known of the antecedents of Mr. and Miss Cornellis; but they were related to Squire Gotham, and she had inherited the Hanford estate. What was to be done? Were Mr. and Mrs. Cable to be called upon? How could the acquaintance with Mr. Cornellis be maintained, if the neighbourhood agreed to ignore the Cables? Metaphorically, every one looked at every one else to know what every one else would do; and what every one else did, that every one else was prepared to indorse. What a pack of moral cowards makes up Society! It is a herd of timorous sheep, bleating to one another to know whether the gap in the hedge is to be passed or not; and when the general consensus is arrived at—heaven knows how—where none will take the initiative, all run at the hedge-gap together, and wedge each other, in their eagerness to be not the last to push through. Sometimes a whole flock will hover about a gap, turning their stupid heads about to see whether they are surrounded by their fellow-sheep, and baaing queries to them, What is to be done? backing a little now, when the sheep in front are bumped back by others; then pushing forward, because the sheep in front ease away a little nearer the gap. Then an old ewe comes up and runs through, and in a moment all follow. The old ewe in the society round Hanford was Lady Brentwood, whom formerly Gabriel Gotham had admired.

'Bless me!' said Lady Brentwood, 'she's not committed a sin. She's a right to please herself; some like apples, others like onions. I shall call.'

Then all Hanford society said: 'We will call.' And Hanford society having decided to call, went headlong to do so, before the return of the bride and bridegroom. Society said that it was its duty to call at the Hall after the death of Mr. Gotham; and Society was mightily inquisitive to know what Mr. Cornellis thought of his daughter's marriage, or rather, what sort of a face he put on it.

Mr. Cornellis had a hold on that section of society which esteemed itself pious, for he was perfectly familiar with all the tricks whereby well-intentioned, simple, easily persuaded per-

sons can be taken by the nose and led to the grindstone. He knew also how to make them hold their own noses to the grindstone, and smile sickly smiles, and give the signal to him to turn the handle. But he was not without influence with quite another section. He could tell a good story, was interested in horses, did not object to a bet, played billiards well, and was esteemed a good fellow, without an atom of cant or humbug in him. Now the sporting men argued that Cornellis would be sure to influence his daughter, and it would be the deuce of a pity if she did not pay to the hunt as liberal a subscription as the old squire. Then again, these Cables had a yacht, and it would be agreeable to be invited for a cruise; so they would call, and see to it that their womankind did likewise.

In early summer, there is an insect with eyes out of all proportion to its body, of a sickly colour, that attacks carnations, pinks, and other soft-wooded garden plants. It is provided with a proboscis, which it drives into the heart of the stalk on which it alights, and through this proboscis it taps the plant of its sap. The creature works itself up and down on its long hind-legs like a pump, and it succeeds in pumping the vital juices out of the plant, and throwing them in a mass of froth, like spittle, around itself. As this so-called Cuckoo-spittle insect acts on garden-flowers so do our neighbours act on us, and we in turn act on them. When anything interesting and gossip-producing happens in our families, they come to us, attach themselves, drive their little tubes down some weak, soft joint, and suck out all the information they desire, and throw out what they have abstracted from us in a world of frothy chatter round them. If we are very shrewd and on our guard, it is interesting to watch these aphides trying us with their pipes—tap, tap here, and tap, tap there; and if we wince by ever so much, in they go, up they kick their hind-legs, and work the pump as if they were extracting for themselves the elixir of life. But if we present to them an impenetrable skin, it by no means follows that they do not make froth-bubbles about us, only, instead of bleeding us, they extract all the requisite liquor from their own imaginations. It is almost incredible how very little liquor will spread into a very large bubble. An aphis will in a few minutes surround itself with a globe of foam a hundred times its own diameter; and our social cuckoo-spittle insects are not behind the insect in their powers of making mountains out of nothing.

A good many of these aphides of society came about the Hall during the time that the Cables were away, to condole with Mr. and Miss Cornellis on the death of Gabriel Gotham, and to congratulate them on the marriage of Josephine. How they drove their taps! How they worked at the pumps, how they explored all the joints of the brother and sister! What froth-bubbles of gossip they exuded! Mr. Cornellis was not easily sucked; but Aunt Judith was less impenetrable.

Mr. Cornellis met all with a *bonhomie* and assumed frankness which turned every proboscis up. 'Girls are romantic creatures. Unfortunately, Gotham left her everything. That upset completely a head already disturbed by her nautical adventure. She had a foolish but generous idea that as she owed her life to the worthy fellow who had saved her in the great storm, she must devote that life to him. I will say this for him: he seemed overwhelmed with the gift, and half disposed to run away when it was proffered. The bequest of Gotham emancipated her from my control. Alas! girls—children generally, in this declining nineteenth century, are not obedient to their parents, but self-willed and self-determining. It was in vain for me to remonstrate. The girl had her high-soaring ideas, and they carried her away. We must make the best of a bad job; and I shall ask my dear friends and neighbours to assist me in lightening to Josephine the humiliation and disappointment which await her, and to exercise toward her and Cable that forbearance which I feel will be necessary.'

There was something grotesque in the way in which the visitors inquired after the Cables. They put their questions, made their remarks in a tentative manner, as if they did not know how to approach the subject with delicacy. It was as though Mr. or Miss Cornellis were troubled with a boil, and the public mind was uncertain where the boil was situated, and whether it was consistent with strict propriety to inquire as to the condition of the boil; whether it were not most judicious to ignore it, and observe the movements of the party suspected of suffering from it, what sort of faces he drew when sitting or standing or leaning, and to speak cheerfully on ordinary subjects, and not seem to observe the anguish and pallor and twinges of the patient; but to be dogmatic upon the situation and condition of the boil to all the neighbourhood, when out of the house.

What a pitiful world we live in! How infinitely helpful

we are to one another in the burying of family skeletons. We call on each other and take afternoon tea with each other, and know all the while that our hostess is covering with her skirts the unearthed bones, which she has been sorting and shivering over till she heard our carriage-wheels, when she dropped them all on the floor and kicked them under the chair. We know they are there, and we give the table-cover a little pull, to make it conceal a ghastly hand that is thrust out, and which our hostess does not see to be exposed. And we chirp about the weather, and laugh over some little local gossip, and go into admiration of the exquisite flowers on the table, so sweetly fragrant; while the smell of moulder-ing bones rises up and overwhelms the otto-like scent of the Jules le Fèvre in the vase. How daintily we tread in our conversation among the dead men's bones that strew the ground of our neighbour; and how, if we happen to touch one, we stoop and scrape the earth together over it, laughing and chattering about matters indifferent, pretending that we are picking daisies. How persistently, when we are dining with our friend, we turn our back to the cupboard in which we know the skeleton is, and put up our eye-glasses to admire the picture opposite, and the china on the cabinet on this side and on that side of the one cupboard, and do not observe the existence of that one cupboard. How quickly, if some other incautious guest approaches it with inquisitive eye, we set our backs against it, and use every ingenious effort to divert his attention to other objects. What a fit of sneezing takes us, and makes us turn away our eyes, when our friend, incautiously pulling out his handkerchief, lets fall a bone; and whilst we turn our eyes and noses away into our own pocket-handkerchiefs, we know he is picking up and recon-cealing that bone inadvertently exposed. Is it said that every man has a skeleton in his closet? That proverb but half expresses the truth; every man has the bones all about him—in his breast-pocket, in his fob, in his purse, in the lining of his hat, in the tails of his coat, in the toes of his boots, like the Pilgrim in 'Sintram.' It were well for him if he could confine his skeleton to the cupboard. But skeletons refuse to be so confined; they come to pieces, however well wired together the joints may be, and disperse their frag-ments everywhere, playing us grim practical jokes, turning up from under our pillow, dropping on us from the ceiling, tripping us up as we are stepping downstairs, lying beside

our plates when we expect to take hold of a knife or fork handle. That is why we are so dependent on the goodwill and courtesy of others, and have to ask them to put their feet on our bones, or turn their heads aside a moment, when they turn up inadvertently.

Pitiful and considerate though we may be when in the presence of our friend, our pity and consideration fall off us the moment we have left him. Then we run to our other neighbours and call them together, and peep and whisper, and point where the bones are hidden, and tell their nature and condition; and put out rakes, and scrape them out of the earth, or rap at the walls and knock holes through which we may peep at the grinning skulls behind. How the nature of these bones changes according as we look at them in the presence of the owner or of others! In his society we scarce see them, and hide our eyes; but when we draw them out and turn them over in social talk with others, what merry-thoughts and funny-bones they prove to us! How we titter over them! What figures we build up out of them, how we dress them with grotesqueness! How we treasure them! If we happen to carry off a neighbour's skeleton bone, we are not like selfish dogs that run and bury their bones lest others should bite them also; but we go generously about with the bone to every kennel within our run, and show the bone to every dog, and invite him to snuff at it, and take a nibble and play with it, rolling it over, pawing it, licking it, tossing it about. Then snap! we have caught our bone, and away we go with it to the next kennel to repeat the same generous sport.

Mr. Cornellis was far too well versed in the ways of the world to attempt to conceal his skeleton, to affect ignorance of its existence. He brought it out; he dressed it up; he exposed it to the full view of every visitor; he said as much as: 'Don't content yourselves with a bone of it. Carry the whole ghastly thing away with you in your carriages, beside you; or perch it on your saddle, if you are riding; and sit behind and hold it up, and show it to every one, clickering and nodding its hideous head, as you go through the streets. Or, if you are walking, unhitch all the joints, and stow it away about you. Fill your coat-tail pockets; stuff your hat with it; cram it into your waistcoat; open your mouth and choke your cheeks with it; extend your hands, and grab all you can of it; leave none behind; take all with you, and be

welcome.' Dom Pedro of Portugal, when he ascended the throne, dug up Inez de Castro, to whom he had been secretly married, and had her skeleton arrayed in royal robes, and crowned and enthroned in the cathedral choir; then summoned all the nobility and clergy and courtiers to do homage to and kiss the withered hand of the corpse. And Mr. Cornellis brought forth his skeleton, and invited every one to see it, and commiserate him openly on being encumbered with it, and even to join with him in a dismal joke over its existence.

His conduct in the matter took the sting and spice out of it, put the neighbourhood in good-humour, and prepared it to accept Josephine as one who had made a blunder, and must be helped to repent it. Cable would be quietly snubbed and thrust aside; his wife made much of, and pardoned, if she consented to keep her husband in the background; or, what would be better still—at sea.

Mr. Cornellis had considered well what was best to be done, and by the time the young couple returned, all the country round was ripe to receive them on the terms he proposed.

The 'Josephine' arrived at Hanford a day or two before she was expected. A sailing-yacht does not come into port to the day like a steamer, nor can the best of vessels be punctual to a minute, as a train is supposed to be. The bride had written to her aunt to say in what week she would be home; but instead of arriving at the end of the week, as Miss Judith expected, the boat came in at the beginning. None of the servants of the Hall were on the beach to receive her; her father and aunt were away that day making purchases at Walton, and did not know that the vessel had been sighted by the coastguard. Though her own relations and servants were not awaiting her, Josephine found that Richard had his friends on the shore, ready to shake hands with him, pat him on the back, and ask with a 'Halloo! old chap!' how he got along.

There was Joe Marriage, in wading-boots up to his thighs, and a dirty jersey of faded blue darned with black and brown, and a sou'-wester hat. His hands were fishy; he had been handling oysters. 'Well, Dick! Brought your missus home? Look alive, and introduce us to the lady.' Then, extending a very dirty flat hand, he grasped and shook that of Josephine: 'Glad to see ye, ma'am. Going to make a gentleman of Dick, are ye? 'Tain't possible, say I.'

Then up came Sam Bucket, and slapped Josephine on the shoulder. 'So, missus! you're back right with your chap. Not made him look much thinner. Which is it to be? Are you a-going to haul Dick Cable up to your level, or be you a-coming down to ourn?'

A gawky young fisherman, Tom Dowse, came staggering up with a pail of shrimps and set it down at Josephine's feet. 'There, my dear,' he said. 'You may take it home and sup on it, and be heartily welcome.'

'Come, missus,' said Jonas Flinders, who was half-drunk, 'you're one of us now, you know, and so shake a flapper. No damned airs;' and then he made a broad joke which brought the colour to Josephine's cheek. The rest laughed; Richard did not hear it; he was shaking hands and receiving congratulations from one of the coastguard, a few paces off. Jonas meant no offence; he would have used the same coarse expression before his own wife and daughters unrebuked. It was customary in his class of life for men and women and lasses to be outspoken, and not mealy-mouthed and nice about what was said or heard.

Josephine drew back. She was offended, and one or two of the others saw she could not stomach such talk; so they explained that Jonas was fresh, and when fresh, a loose-tongued chap, but good-hearted, and a fine sailor.

'If some of you will carry my traps to the Hall,' said Josephine stiffly, 'you shall be paid for it.'

'O hang it!' said one, 'we'll carry your parcels without payment; but we'll make so free as to ask you to give us a glass of grog in your kitchen to drink your health and success to your voyage of life with Dick for your captain.'

Josephine again looked round for her husband; but as he did not come to her, she moved away towards her home. One of the men had her bundle of rugs; another hoisted a portmanteau on his shoulder; a third carried a roll of umbrellas, waterproofs, and a yellow railway novel; and a fourth tucked a tin bonnet-box under his arm. The tiresome, tipsy Jonas would keep near her and talk in a familiar manner, and diffuse about him an odour of stale tobacco and beer. Escorted by these men, sensible that she cut a ridiculous figure, annoyed by the well-intentioned importunities of Jonas, vexed that none of her own servants were at the landing-place to receive her parcels, Josephine approached her home not in the best of tempers. As she entered the

grounds, her father and aunt arrived in an open carriage. He was driving; and he drew up and waited, with an amused expression, till she came near, when Jonas, tripping on the stone in the entrance gates that received the bolt of the double doors, sprawled in her way at her feet, and sent the pail of shrimps he carried over, so that the creatures were scattered in all directions over the drive. His accident elicited a general roar. Josephine turned a deeper colour than the shrimps.

'Where is Mr. Cable?' she asked impatiently.

'Lor, missus!' shouted Jonas, trying in vain to recover his upright position, 'dang it—he's gone after his kids, o' course, like a loving father to his poor orphans.'

'Come along, my men,' said Mr. Cornellis, with a laugh which cut Josephine like a knife. 'Round to the back-door, please, and I will order you all out some ale. The front-door is only for Mr. Cable, by permission of his wife.'

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOME?

'We dine at half-past seven. The rector and Mrs. Sellwood are coming. They have that French Countess staying with them.'

'Very well, papa.—Are those dreadful men gone?'

'Hark! They are giving you three cheers. They will have to carry Jonas Flinders away in a wheelbarrow. He was tipsy when he came. He's a relation of Richard's, is he not?'

'No, papa,' said Josephine, colouring. 'Richard has no relations here.'

'I am glad of that. I made a mistake. He is a kinsman of the first Mrs. Cable—brother, if I am not misinformed, of the deceased Polly. I am glad the tie is no more than that. It would have been awkward to have a drunken brother-in-law, or something of that sort, demanding his entrée. Even as it is, I foresee some awkwardness—he will come to visit Richard, if he does not force his presence on you. It will be as well to let him understand always to go round to the back when he calls.'

An hour passed before Richard Cable came to the Hall. He hesitated about entering by the front and without ringing. He suddenly felt that he was in an awkward position. His wife was Squiress of Hanford, lady of the manor; the mansion belonged to her, and he—he would not be master in the house, and in that great house would probably feel uncomfortable. Home to him was a cottage with a big back garden, and a vine running over the low roof, a kitchen in which the meals were not only cooked but also eaten, and a little bedroom with the stairs opening into it; and a lean-to roof where all the rafters showed. He stood in the porch, supported on pillars, put his hand before his mouth, and coughed. The glass window was open, and he looked into the hall; it had a polished oak floor inlaid in patterns. There was a billiard-table in it. There were carved cabinets, with yellow and blue Japanese vases on them, and crimson cloth curtains before the staircase which opened out of the hall. Mr. Cable ventured a little way within and coughed again. Then, frightened at his own voice, he retreated into the porch, and examined the white jessamine that trailed up it. If he were to go in—he would not know his way about the house. It seemed too absurd to ring the bell, and hardly proper for him to go round to the kitchen.

Richard Cable was a shy man when out of his proper element and among those he did not know intimately. Brave at sea and in any peril, he was timid on land when placed in situations with which he was unacquainted. He was a humble man, with much self-diffidence, and only strong when he thought he was doing his duty. As he stood in the door, duty was neither before him nor behind him, on this side, nor on that; and he was perplexed. He put his nose to the jessamine, and thrust his hands into his pockets. He knitted his brows and considered. Now he wished he had come along with Josephine directly after landing; then he could have entered the house at her side and taken his proper place; but the strong hunger in his heart to see and clasp the dear golden heads had carried him away, and he had missed his proper opportunity.

Something must be done, he said, and drew his nose away from the jessamine. He pulled his right hand out of his pocket, took off his glazed hat, and walked boldly into the hall, where he began to hum a tune, and he hung up his hat on the peg near the door. He snuffed up a pleasant odour.

It is a remarkable phenomenon that the smell of dinner invariably goes where it is not wanted, and where it ought not to be. It is not smelt in the kitchen, where it is cooked; but it travels into the bedrooms; it pervades the staircases; it penetrates to the drawing-room; and it meets those who are about to partake of the dinner, at the entrance of the house. Architects rack their brains, engineers scheme, to circumvent the smell of dinner—all in vain. It will not be circumvented. It has been known to come out of the house by the kitchen chimney, scramble down the roof, and take up a position, from which nothing can drive it away, a quarter of a mile off at the lodge-gates. Now, if it were only the vanilla flavouring of the blanc-mange, or the cinnamon for the stewed pears, or the ratafia for the trifle, that thus announced itself, no one would object; but these delicate essences are elbowed away and down-trodden by the coarser savours of boiled cabbage and cauliflower. Woe betide the householder if he keeps pigs, and his factotum induces him to boil potatoes for the sty. The smell of those potatoes becomes a thick reek in every portion of his house; and by that perversity which orders the events of life, the pig potatoes are certain to be boiling when distinguished, even titled, visitors call on us, and it sends them away after a curtailed call, impressed with the belief that our sewers are out of order.

Richard Cable was hungry; and the smell that saluted his nose was grateful. He thought at once, with a softening of the heart, that Josephine had considered him, and was doing a chop or a rasher for him. His mother had desired to detain him, and had promised him supper; but he would not stay with her, because he thought his duty called him to the side of Josephine. As he was venturing hesitatingly across the hall, he heard a door slam, heard a step, and at once, overwhelmed with terror, ran back to the porch, but not before the butler had caught sight of him, and came after him, with a: 'Now, then! What are you doing here? Trying to take off a great-coat, eh? One of them drunken rascals as have been in the kitchen, I'll be bound.'

'I beg your pardon,' said Richard, standing still, and becoming red as fire, whilst his nether limbs shook; 'I'm—I'm the husband of Miss Josephine, sir. That is—sir, I'm Mr. Richard Cable.'

'I'm very sorry, sir, very sorry,' said the butler, his face altering immediately. 'I did not see at first; I thought it

was an intruder, and I wasn't sure what he might be up to. —O sir, here come the rector and the ladies.'

The door was darkened by the arrival of the guests.

'There's dinner, sir, immediate, if you'd run upstairs and dress. I'll tell cook to put off five minutes.'

'Dress!' exclaimed Richard, startled, and casting a hasty glance about himself to see if by accident any portion of his garments had not been put on.

'Upstairs, right-hand side of passage, first door, is your dressing-room, sir,' said the butler, covering him from the visitors.

'But I don't want a dressing-room, sir!' remonstrated Richard. 'I'm in my togs.'

'What! Cable!' called the rector, coming forward. 'Did not expect you here. Did not know that you had returned; wish you joy and happiness. But—I see, just off the water, and I am detaining you from dressing.'

Richard ascended the stairs in a puzzled state of mind, and walked on the side, not in the middle, lest he should dirty the pretty red carpet that ran down the stairs. When he came to the top, he looked about him. 'First door on right hand,' he said, and went to one, but was doubtful whether it were the right door, for the butler had said something about a passage. He saw no passage. He stood hesitatingly at the door and coughed. Then he put his hand on the handle, but doubted whether he ought to open, fearing this might be the wrong room, so he coughed again and tapped faintly at the door. Instantly it flew open, and Josephine appeared in white satin with lace and orange flowers, and a few pearl-gray silk bows, as a compliment to the memory of Cousin Gabriel, as an acknowledgment that she was in mourning. She looked very lovely in her evening dress; it was her bridal dress made into one for the evening.

'Good gracious, Richard! you're not dressed!' she exclaimed, and stepped back.

'Not dressed!' he said with a stupid stare. 'You're the third person who has said this, and yet—I—I can't believe it. I know I am in my togs.'

'O Richard! how late you are. Be quick—you will keep everyone waiting. *Do* dress.'

'Dress!' he exclaimed, becoming desperate. 'What more will you have? Shall I put on my greatcoat?'

'Good gracious!' said Josephine, putting her hand to her

chin, 'merciful heavens! I don't believe you have got any clothes!'

'Feel me,' said Richard, 'if you cannot believe your eyes. I've got my suit on.'

'But not your dress suit. Goodness! what is to be done! I never thought about a set of evening clothes for you. I really supposed you might have provided all that for yourself.'

'I've got the frockcoat in which I was married,' said Cable, 'and the lavender thing-um-jigs, and a yellow nankeen waistcoat. What more do you want?'

'Get into that,' said Josephine hastily; 'there is no help for it. I really must go down. The rector and Mrs. Sellwood have come.'

About ten minutes later, Richard Cable was heard coughing outside the drawing-room door. He was shy of entering, and stuck there hesitating, hearing the voices within, till the butler came to his aid and precipitated him into the parlour. Then he stood bewildered, looking vacantly about him, till the rector came to his aid and conveyed him into the middle of the room.

Josephine looked keenly at him, and almost wished he had come in his dark-blue sailor suit, which became him, instead of cutting the preposterous figure he did. In his nautical dress, he looked so handsome, such a frank, manly fellow, so every inch one of nature's gentlemen; but now—in the black frockcoat and lavender trousers, uncomfortable, shy, ungainly—and—O horror of horrors! without having changed his shirt, with the old coarse linen collars and front, clean but crumpled—and—and—— Josephine was in the midst of a conversation in French with the Countess de Marluche, whom the Sellwoods had brought with them, when she lost the thread, forgot what she was saying, forgot the subject about which she was conversing, in her consternation at the figure her husband cut among well-dressed ladies and gentlemen.

'Dinner is served,' said the butler.

She recovered herself at once, and said to the countess: 'We are just off the water. Our yacht only arrived a few hours ago, and we have to ask your indulgence if we appear in picnic guise.'

Then she saw Aunt Judith looking at her, and the rector came over towards her. She was startled. She had forgotten that she, not her aunt, was the lady of the house. Her father

turned to Richard Cable, and said: 'It is your place, Mr. Cable, to take in the Countess—will you lead the way?'

Josephine cast an appealing look at her father; but he took no notice of it.

Richard was obliged to give his arm to the French lady and lead the way. He was followed by Mr. Cornellis with Mrs. Sellwood; then came Captain Sellwood and Aunt Judith; lastly, the rector and the bride.

Captain Sellwood maintained an imperturbable face. He would not have come, had he known that Josephine had returned. Mr. Cornellis had begged him to make one of the quiet dinner that evening, quite a family party, no strangers. In the little society of Hanford, scarce a week passed without a small dinner of this sort, cosy little dinners, where old friends met again and again at each other's houses. As the Cornellis family were in mourning, recent mourning, of course they gave no parties; but these small unceremonious dinners did not count.

When Richard, with the French lady on his arm, arrived in the hall, he stood still, put his hand to his mouth and coughed. 'By George,' he said, 'I don't know the bearings.'

'This way, sir,' explained the obsequious butler, bowing at the dining-room door. Then: 'Excuse me, sir; you're at the wrong end of the table—up the room, sir.'

'We shall get right at last, ma'am,' said Richard to his companion. 'I hope you're as ready as I am to play a good knife and fork.'

'Mais! malheureusement! monsieur, je ne parle que fort peu l'anglais.'

A goose was in front of Richard. He stood up to carve it, and turned back his cuffs. 'I daresay the old lady is hungry,' he said to himself in his kindly thoughts. 'I'm sure in her foreign country she don't get such solid food as in England. We didn't, I know;' so he helped her to the leg of the goose.

'Mais, monsieur, je vous prie!—c'est un peu trop!'

'Too much?' So he sliced the leg in half, and served her the drumstick.

'There's stuffing, sir,' said the butler confidentially in his ear.

'Is there, sir?' answered Richard. 'How the blazes am I to get at it? It is not often we've had a chance of carving a goose, I can tell you.'

Josephine looked on in terror, lest he should splash the gravy about the table, possibly over the Countess; but Richard had a hand at once too firm and gentle for that. Though he had no great experience in carving, he managed fairly well, only that he gave enormous helpings to every one, generous helpings, because he wished all to have enough, and he measured all appetites by his own.

He made a few attempts at conversation with the countess, but could not succeed; her knowledge of English was rudimentary, his knowledge of French was *nil*.

Josephine was fortunately saved the effort of making conversation at her end of the table, because she sat by the rector, who could and did talk whenever he had a chance. She was at leisure, whilst half listening to his voice, to watch her husband's face. It wore its usual kind and honest expression, but it was troubled. He was uncomfortable, willing to do his best, desirous to do his duty, but ignorant as to what he ought to do, and bewildered by the strangeness of the situation in which he found himself.

Even whilst speaking to the rector, Josephine's eyes became dim with a mixed emotion—vexation that Richard should cut such an absurd figure, and pity for him, because she knew he was suffering. Then she felt her brow become warm, for the great solemn eyes of the captain—after having rested on Richard for a moment whilst he finished his gravy with his knife, putting it into his mouth—turned and looked at Josephine, and at once dropped.

'Dick will need some taking in hand,' thought Josephine; 'he is better at sea than on land.'

If Richard Cable had been a bumptious man, one with much self-assurance, he would have talked and joked and drunk his wine and felt quite at his ease, and gone to bed believing that he had made a good impression on the company; but Richard was a modest man, always mistrustful of himself where he did not see his way, very sensitive, and somewhat alive to the ridiculous. He was, though he did not know it, so thoroughly a gentleman at heart, that he shrank from intruding where he was unqualified to take his place. Now, in society, into which he was cast headlong, at a dinner, of a sort with which he was quite unfamiliar, dressed differently from the other gentlemen, and knowing that he did not look well in his clothes, he was troubled and frightened, and only partly recovered himself when the ladies had left the

room, and the rector took his glass and came over to the end by Cable, as he did not attempt to come to the rector's end. The rector was a man of the world, and could get on with any one. He at once began to speak about the cruise in the yacht, and having got Richard on a familiar subject, with great forbearance encouraged Cable to talk, instead of doing all the talking himself.

When Cable spoke of anything that he understood he spoke well, straightforwardly and intelligently. The rector kept him in the dining-room a long time. He was interested in the cruise of the 'Josephine.' Perhaps he saw that it was a kindness to keep his host there, conversing on what he could talk about, instead of bringing him into the drawing-room and the society of the ladies.

'Shall we rejoin the ladies?' asked Mr. Cornellis.

'No hurry, Cornellis,' answered the rector.—'What capital port this is; I'll have another glass. Mrs. Sellwood must be allowed her nap.'

When, about eleven o'clock, the guests were gone, and Mr. Cornellis and Aunt Judith had retired, then, for the first time since they had landed, Josephine and Richard were alone together. She closed the piano and blew out some of the candles and turned down the lamp. Richard was standing at the chimney-piece with one hand on the marble mantel-shelf, looking at the French ormolu clock. His head was slightly bent; he was immersed in thought, just as many a time he had stood at night resting his hand on the bulwarks of his lightship in a dream.

'What is it, Richard?' asked Josephine, going up to him.

'I was thinking—it is half-past eleven—of the little bedroom at home where mother and all my children are now asleep, and the angels watch them.'

'Home,' said Josephine reproachfully. 'This now is your home. Is it not beautiful?'

'This—home!' He looked round with dazed eyes. 'Home?'

'Of course, Richard.'

'Home?' He shook his head. 'If I was dead and gone to another world, I reckon at first I should feel a bit muddled. In time, maybe, it will come—not all at once.' And as he went upstairs, he wondered in his heart whether he could ever come to feel there—in that grand house, among those strange people—at home.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A FISH OUT OF WATER.

'WARM, sir, or cold?' asked the boy who assisted the butler, cleaned the boots, and was generally useful about the house.

'Warm or cold *what*?' asked Richard in return.

'Please, sir, your bath. A can of warm water, or all cold, sir?'

'I don't want neither.—Bath!' exclaimed Richard—'bath! I ain't a baby to be tubbed.—And who are you? Are you sent to tub me?'

'Please, sir, every gentleman has his bath every morning, sir. Mr. Cornellis always do.'

'Every morning!' gasped Cable. 'Mercy on us—every morning! I'll have it neither hot nor cold. Take that flat pan away.'

Richard Cable's early hours surprised the household. In England, we are not early risers; we prefer the fag-end of the day to the prime of the morning. We neither rise with the sun nor set with him. The English day is like the calendar before the new style was adopted, it is wrong with the sun. The scullery-maid was startled one morning to find the master laying and lighting the fire in the kitchen, to save her trouble; nor was the boy less astonished to find him in the boot-hole blacking his own boots.

'My dear Richard,' said Josephine that same morning, 'what dirty hands you had at breakfast. What had you been doing?'

'Cleaning the boots—there are such a lot for that whipper-snapper of a boy.'

'You must not do that.—And, now I am on the subject, I have put a nail-brush in your washstand; would you mind using it?'

'Anything to please you,' answered Richard.

'And—by the way—you really must not call the butler, Sir; nor the housemaid, Miss.'

'Why not? They are as good as me.'

'It won't do; they only laugh at you behind your back. And don't address the boy as Young Shaver; that also is not quite right.—Do not be angry with me, Richard.'

'I'm not angry,' he said. 'It's enough to make me sweat.'

'Richard!'

'What is the matter now?'

'Be more choice in your expressions; say perspire.'

'I only mean that it puts me in a fever to think what I ought to do and what I ought not to do. It's like what they do to lunatics—put 'em in strait-waistcoats. I seem to be in one now, and you a-lacing of me up as tight as ever you can. I'll get to like it in time, maybe, but it ain't easy at first.'

'If you do not mind my speaking,' pursued Josephine, 'there is one little matter more. You managed to cut these ribs of mutton well enough last night; but you should not take the end of the chop in your hand and pick the bone with your teeth. You cut off all the meat with the knife, holding the bone with your fork.'

'But I couldn't get it all off.'

'Then send it out, cleared with the knife, as well as you can.'

'It's wicked waste.'

'I tell you it won't do. Then you wiped your fingers on your whiskers.'

'Where else would you have me wipe them? Not on the tablecloth, surely?'

'Of course not—on your napkin.'

'But that is so beautifully clean, it is a pity to dirty it.'

'It can be washed.—Richard, it won't do; the whiskers were not given to a man to clean his greasy fingers on. I saw my father laugh, and my aunt did not know which way to look. The butler ran out of the room and exploded in the hall.'

'Well,' said Cable cheerfully, 'I gave 'em a good laugh, and I'm glad of that. That butler chap seems solemn as a Methody parson. He don't seem to me like a proper human being, but to be a doll moved by clockwork. I'll try him some evening. He and I'll have a pipe and grog together, and I'll tell him some of my good stories, and see if I can't make him jolly.'

'You shall do nothing of the sort, Richard,' said Josephine sharply; 'I cannot have you demean yourself to the level of the servants.' Then seeing that he was hurt, she regretted the tone in which she had spoken, went to him, put a hand on each of his shoulders, and looking into his troubled face,

said: 'Richard, I've been considering about the little ones. It won't do to have them living away in another house. It will make me jealous, for you will be always running away from me to be with them, and you will come to regard that cottage as your home, not this. Besides, if you are to break with the past mode of life, it will be best to do this altogether and at once.'

'Give up the cottage?' exclaimed Richard, and his face expressed distress.

'You will bring all the dear children here.'

'Yes,' said he, musing; 'they will like the garden; it is very pretty; but it won't quite be like the old one, neither to them nor to me.' A look of pain was in his kind face. 'But, when the grapes are ripe, we'll go there and picnic whilst I cut the bunches.'

'There are better grapes in the houses here. The sweet-water and muscat——'

'Ain't equal to the home grapes, I'll swear,' said Cable. 'Bless me! it ain't the quality; it's the where they grows.'

'Where they grow, not grows. "They" is plural, not singular.'

'That's all,' he said in a tone of depression.

'I am afraid I interrupted you.'

'I was only thinking what larks it was—me up the ladder cutting the grapes and passing 'em down to the children; and I don't believe any other grape could taste as sweet and look as lovely as did those black Hamboros—not to the children. They growed——'

'Grew,' interjected Josephine.

'They growed,' Richard went on, disregarding the interruption, 'over the roof what all them little golden heads lay under; and I used to say that was how the bunches ripened on all sides alike. Above was the sun, and under were those six little sunny heads and hearts, warming the roof above. The black Hamboros couldn't do other than ripen under the circumstances, and be sweet as sugar-cane.'

'There is only one difficulty in the matter that occurs to me, said Josephine, 'and that is about your mother. She would hardly like to come and live here with us. She would feel out of her element at our table and in the drawing-room; and yet, she will not like to leave the children. I have thought of engaging a nurse and a girl to attend to the children. But your mother—what is to be done with her?

You see, she would be a difficulty if she associated with us; and we could not suffer her to associate with the servants. I am puzzled what to do.'

'Never think that she will come here,' said Richard. 'I don't believe she'd other than suffocate—not that she's asthmatical; but I fancy there's something here might take the breath away and kill her. I feel it; and I'm young. There ain't a room in the house where I can properly stretch my legs and arms, big though they be, and I could do it in my little lean-to bedroom at the cottage.'

'What do you say, Richard, to her going into the lodge? She need not open the gate when carriages come; she can keep a girl to do that. There she will be near the children, and yet not in the house. I suggest this because I think it would suit all of us.'

'Don't ask my opinion,' said Richard sadly; 'it's a queer turnabout. When you came to me, you asked me to guide and pilot you; and now it is I, not you, am in unknown seas, and I know no more what to do and where to go than if I was in the desert of Sahara. It is you are pilot, not I. What you say is to be done—I must do; and where you say I am to turn my bows, there I steer.'

'Will your mother consent to come to the lodge?'

'I daresay, if you wish it. She's a proud woman, and would not like to intrude where she is not wanted. She's not been here yet, and will never come uninvited. She was born and bred in that lodge, and there her father's body was brought when he was drowned, and there her mother died. It will be to her a home because of all the memories that cling about it. It is that which makes a home, miss.'

'You have forgotten—you must not call me miss.'

'Of course not. You're right, and I'm wrong. I'm in that state of muddle that I don't know anything. I was saying that it is the memories that make a home. It isn't the sticks of furniture, nor the carpets, nor the pictures. 'Tisn't even the live beings you put into the place; it is all the thoughts and experiences, the sorrows and the joys that take a long time a-growing, but which will grow everywhere, if you allow them the proper time. Everything here is strange to me. I don't know my way about the house yet, and the ways of life are stranger still. I reckon that even bringing the little ones here will not make a home of it all at once. But with time and patience, it will come. I remember how it was with

that black Hamboro. It was a little bit of a plant given me by Jonas Flinders before ever I married Polly, struck off the vine he had. It was nothing, but it growed——'

'It grew,' corrected Josephine.

'It grew,' said Richard, and touched his forelock. 'It grew beautifully, little by little, first the blade, then the leaf, and then the tendril and flower, and last of all the fruit; and it ran at a gallop when once it had got upon the roof, as if it could not grow fast enough.—Grow? No; grew.'

'No; quite right. "It could not grow;" but, "it grew."'

'As if it could not grow fast enough, and cover enough of warm roof, and I had to pick off scores of bunches, or it would have made too many and exhausted itself. But, you understand, that was after a while, not all at once. So, perhaps, it is here. There are the cuttings put in, and we must wait for leaf and flower and fruit and the clinging tendrils—all that will come in due time, if it please the Lord. I'll bide in patience; I can't expect it all at once.'

Richard walked away, to talk the matter over with his mother. When he was out of the house and garden, by himself on the seawall, the cloud that had been hovering over his brow descended and darkened the expression of his face. Sometimes, whilst we are watching a glittering snow-wreathed Alpine peak, on which the sun is blazing, light clouds drift across the head and disappear; then others gather and cling, and by degrees the snows are enveloped in vapour, and what was fleecy becomes heavy, and what was white darkens to purple, and the whole sky is changed; the sun is no more seen, but thunder and rain riot about the mountain. It was not quite so with Richard Cable, but threatenings of a storm appeared. Whilst he was with Josephine, he had exerted great self-control. A man sensitive and diffident, he was hurt by her correction of his mistakes, at the time that he acknowledged that he was liable to make mistakes. He wished to do what was right; but in the position in which he found himself, it was not possible for him to discover within himself the rules by which to act.

The rules of social life are to some extent arbitrary, or they are founded on conditions which a man of the people does not understand. They do not spring out of the eternal principles of right and wrong, but out of social adjustments and compromises arrived at by generations of culture. Consequently,

Richard had as little knowledge of what to do, as a man who cannot swim knows how to save himself when out of his depth, with a current carrying him out to sea. He made mistakes, floundered about, was aware that he became ridiculous, and yet did not know how to avoid error, and where to find and how to put his feet on firm ground. To a man with self-respect, with strong sense of moral dignity, such a situation is eminently galling. Richard had avoided showing how he suffered, whilst he was with Josephine; but when he was by himself, the sense of humiliation, of irritation, and a brooding anger against no particular thing and no one in particular began to overshadow and darken his spirit. Several times during his conversation with Josephine a flash had passed through his mind; but it was like summer lightning unattended by muttering thunder. Now his step had lost its even swing; he walked hastily and irregularly, as his humour altered. At one moment he was hot, and a quiver of anger ran through him; then he cooled, and his breast rose as he drew a long breath. He put up his hand to his brow. 'I sweat,' he said. 'I mean, I perspire; and I don't know whether I'm in an ague or what is on me. I never was like this afore. Well, 'tis disconcerting, when a tug that is signalled to, instead of tugging, is taken in tow.'

Josephine, after he had left, remained with her hands in her lap, looking out of the window at nothing, thinking about Richard. She was sorry that she had said so much to him about his mistakes; but really, she did not know where to begin with his schooling, there was so much to correct in his language and manners and habits. It was strange that she observed his want of refinement now, and that she had not noticed it before. Even on board the 'Josephine,' it had not been observable; it was only conspicuous when he was out of his navy-blue sailor's jacket and loose trousers and flapping collar, and cap with the ribbons behind. What a fine fellow he was walking the deck! How was it that he cut such a grotesque figure in the drawing-room? She was provoked with him that he did not conform at once to more cultured life, and accommodate himself instinctively to the methods and modes of the class into which she had translated him. Then she beat down the feeling of vexation that rose in her heart, and reasoned with herself that she was demanding of him impossibilities. She was alive to his good qualities, but they were good qualities badly set. A diamond is nothing till it is

cut and polished; the precious metals must be cleansed of their dross before they acquire their proper value. The roughness of surface, the inherent dross in Richard, were unpleasantly conspicuous, and the polishing, the purifying, could not be done all at once. She began to see that he would be useless to her as an adviser, and that she would be thrown back on her father, for lack of another. Her father had treated her with great forbearance, even kindness, since her final battle with him, since he saw that she was resolved to carry her point. He had not reproached her since; he had not taken advantage of the opportunities Richard had given him for letting her see that he was out of place. He did his best to thrust Richard forward—to insist on his occupying the principal position in the house; he showed deference to him, and himself kept in the background. This was a little provoking occasionally, because Cable was incapable of taking the lead, and wanted support and direction, which Mr. Cornellis, with apparent delicacy, refrained from tendering.

Richard Cable had but just returned from the cottage, and had rejoined Josephine in the garden, to tell her the result of his interview with his mother, when a handsome carriage and pair with liveried coachman and footman drove in at the gates and drew up at the porch.

'Good gracious!' said Josephine, 'there is Lady Brentwood.—Richard, do be on your *P*s and *Q*s.'

'On my what?'

She had no time to explain, as Lady Brentwood had seen her and was waving her parasol to her.

Josephine ran to the carriage-door, and was followed by her husband. 'Richard, help Lady Brentwood down.—Let me introduce my husband, dear Lady Brentwood.'

Lady Brentwood was a tall fine woman, with almost white hair, and dark eyebrows, which she raised and depressed in a manner that made the person she was speaking with think she was being stared at and quizzed. Lady Brentwood was not above taking stock of the person she conversed with; but she was incapable of doing what was rude. The fact of her eyebrows being very marked and dark, and of the trick she had of throwing them up and then bringing them down again, and screwing up her eyes, gave her the appearance of being a quiz.

'Have you come a long way, ma'am?' asked Richard. 'Would you like some beer? There's a good cool tap. I'll

run and fetch you some at once.—No, ma'am ?—I'm sure you look tired.'

'Thank you, Mr. Cable,' said Lady Brentwood, her eyebrows very elevated, and this time with real amazement. 'I will ask your wife for a cup of tea.'

'Only make you hotter, ma'am,' said Richard.—'But stay. Your coachie and flunky, I'm sure, won't object to a glass of beer; I'll run and fetch it them. They look to me broiling on the box—and——'

He turned sharply round to Josephine. 'What is it? Why are you pinching me?'

'I am not.'

'You were.'

She frowned, and signed with her eyes and mouth.

'Of course the lady will be glad that her chaps should have a glass. Are you not, ma'am? It's kindly meant; their tongues are almost hanging out of their mouths with thirst, like running dogs.'

Josephine sighed. How she then wished she were cast with Richard on a desert island. They might be happy together there, but not in England. 'Shall I ever be able to get my cub licked into shape?' she asked herself, and sighed again. 'I believe my father was right; I have made a fatal mistake.'

CHAPTER XXV.

LAVENDER.

'My dear,' said Lady Brentwood, 'you know me—you know what I am—the most obstinate creature in the world, only to be paralleled with the donkey, especially when set on wickedness. Now, I have set my heart on something tremendously naughty. I'm going to carry you and your husband off for a night, at once. I will take you away with me in my carriage. I've got Admiral Fitzgibbon, and Mr. Jenkyns, who is one of the Lords of the Admiralty—and, *entre nous*, knows no more about ships than an opossum—coming to dine with me, and I want your husband to be with us. He knows all about nautical matters; he has them at his fingers' ends; and Mr. Jenkyns will be thankful to meet him. My dear, these

public men always remind me of eating crab. They like to take a good intelligent and experienced skull and sit over it, and pick at the flesh and brain, and mix and put pepper and mustard and vinegar to it, and stir, and then eat and enjoy. Mr. Cable will be a perfect crab to the Lord of the Admiralty. Your husband is a specialist in his way. You see I am horribly selfish and savagely frank. I tell you everything. The fact is, I want to make an agreeable dinner-party, and I know that your good dear husband is the dish of dishes for Mr. Jenkyns and Admiral Fitzgibbon.'

'Where is the wickedness, ma'am?' asked Richard, much surprised. 'If I can be of any use, or agreeable to any one, I'm heartily willing.'

'My dear Mr. Cable—is it not cruel—barbarous—to drag you and Josephine away just after your arrival, before you have had time to turn about and shake down?—before you have unpacked all the treasures you have picked up on your wedding tour?—before you have arranged the pretty presents given you on your marriage? Upon my word, I am ashamed of myself; but there—I am the most selfish woman in the world.' Up went her eyebrows. 'I have told you my reasons; I play with my cards on the table.'

'Why, ma'am,' said Richard Cable, 'I don't see that this is cruel of you, not barbarous at all, but very kind. Some folks, when they do a pretty thing, make a deal of palaver about it. But you, ma'am, as I judge, do a kind thing, and try to make it seem as if it was you who were favoured, and not we.'

Lady Brentwood raised her eyebrows; she was touched with the simplicity of the man; but Josephine thought the raised brows meant that she was amused at his simplicity and was inwardly laughing at it; so she said hastily: 'You are indeed most kind—but you are always kind.' She cast a look at her husband, intended to bid him hold his tongue and leave the conduct of the affair to her. 'But——'

'I will take no *buts*,' said Lady Brentwood. 'I have Mr. Cable on my side, I am sure.'

'Well, ma'am,' he began again; but Josephine cut him short.

'I shall be very happy, dear *Lady* Brentwood'—she looked at her husband indignantly as she emphasised the title of her visitor—'I shall be only too pleased to be with you; but, unfortunately, my husband cannot accompany me.'

'Why not?' asked Lady Brentwood with pursed lips and raised brows.

'You see, he has so much to attend to just at present—about the yacht. There are the men.' An idea flashed through her head. 'They are to have their supper to-night, and it would perhaps hurt their feelings if Richard did not attend.'

'Can you not postpone the supper?'

'Hardly. I suppose the goose is killed and stuffed. The men will be paid off and dispersed.'

'But, my dear, we have a lawn-tennis party to-morrow, and Mr. Jenkyns leaves to-morrow morning. It is such an opportunity. I really have set my heart on introducing the Admiral and Mr. Jenkyns to your husband. You know Admiral Fitzgibbon? His wife is a charming woman, the daughter of Lord Arthur St. Clair.'

A dinner at Brentwood Hall! Her husband encircled by an exalted naval officer, a Lord of the Admiralty, gentlemen of county position, ladies of high degree and perfect polish, all quizzing and observing. The idea to Josephine was intolerable. She thought of him sitting on the edge of a chair with his knees wide apart, and his great red hands on each knee, his elbows stiff, his boots shapeless, his face brown. She thought of him cutting his bread, holding the knife at the junction of the blade and the haft, and cutting the bread against his thumb. It would never do. If he were resolved to go, she would stay at home. The colour mounted to her cheeks.

'Impossible, I do assure you, dear Lady Brentwood. You must really excuse him. In a little while it will be different. My husband will be more free; now, his hands are tied. There are'—she hesitated—'reasons which make it necessary for him to stay; but I will attend you, if you will put up with poor me.'

'My dear,' said Lady Brentwood, laughing, 'the lavender will flourish here.'

'Lavender! What do you mean?'

'Do you know, Mr. Cable?' asked the visitor with a mischievous but good-humoured laugh.

'No, ma'am—I mean, my lady.' He caught his wife's eye. 'I don't see why lavender should not thrive here; it likes a sandy soil, and the sand comes out in the garden. I can't say I've observed any in the beds; but I'm partial myself to lavender, and I'll have some put in; leastways'—he corrected

himself—'I have no doubt *she* will, and if she don't care to have it here, I can plant some in the cottage garden.'

'Oh,' said Lady Brentwood, laughing, and with elevated eyebrows—'oh, the lavender will grow here.'

Josephine winced, and was hot. What did her visitor mean? Was she poking fun at her?

'You do not know?' asked Lady Brentwood. 'I'll tell you all about it in the carriage. Well, if it must be—I must swallow my disappointment. But what shall I do? These dear fox-hunters and sporting men will talk of nothing but runs and covers; and the Admiral and Mr. Jenkyns will perish with ennui. I am like the man of Macedonia who appeared to St. Paul and cried, "Come over and help us." You won't come—or you won't let Mr. Cable come to the rescue. I am disposed to turn sulky; but there—I will not press you, though I feel sure, if I appealed to Mr. Cable, I might carry my point. I can see it in his face. However, if the lavender is to grow, I will not interfere with its planting.'

Josephine's nerves were tingling; her finger-ends burnt as though she had touched nettles. On one side was Lady Brentwood torturing her; on the other her husband with infinite possibilities of *gaucherie* in him, and she did not know what he might say or do next moment. She started to her feet with a sense of relief when her father and Aunt Judith entered the room. 'Dear Lady Brentwood,' she said, and her voice, in spite of her efforts to control it, shook slightly, 'you must not try your powers of persuasion; you know that you are irresistible. It is hard of me to ask you to receive me alone; but indeed my husband cannot, must not come. It is hard for me to attempt to entertain Lords of the Admiralty; but I have had my experience of sandbanks on which one may be cast away—and I can talk of that.' Then, at once, her temples flushed, as she thought that Lady Brentwood might suspect in these words a covert reference to her unfortunate marriage. 'Here is Aunt Judith! Whilst I get together my few effects, she will entertain you. Richard will come and help me. He is, what I am not, a neat packer. I bundle all my traps into the box, and sugar them over with pins. Come, Richard! You will excuse us, Lady Brentwood, I am sure.' Then she whisked out of the room, followed leisurely by Cable. She slid her hand up the banister, and clutched it tightly at every few steps with convulsive twinges. She was in a state of quivering nervous excitation.

When she reached her own room, she threw herself into n armchair and said imperiously: 'Pack my things. I will oint out what I want.'

Cable, instead of obeying, stood before her with his head ent, his grave eyes fixed on her face. His brow was lined. Iad there been these furrows there before his marriage? osephine had not observed them previously.

'What is the meaning of this?' he asked.

'Take your hands out of your pockets when addressing me,' ie said, and fanned her hot face with her pocket-handkerchief.

He obeyed, and folded his arms. 'I do not understand hat this means,' he said.

'Indeed!'—spoken contemptuously.

'Why do you object to my going with you to the lady's ouse, Josephine?'

'I will trouble you,' she said with voice shaking with nger—'I will trouble you to call me by my proper name. am not Jŏss-ephine, as you are pleased to designate me. he patriarch is not, I believe, by the most illiterate, entitled oss-eph, and I object to be called other than Jōsephine.'

He looked at her with distressed expression on his face. I did not think there was anything wrong'—he began, and rew his kerchief from his pocket.

Then she stamped with her feet together impatiently on ie floor. 'For heaven's sake,' she exclaimed, 'put away that etestable spotted blue pocket-handkerchief, as big as a sail! t is vulgar, it is odious. I hate the sight of it. It turns me int. Give it to Jane for a duster.' She was in that condition f irritation when every trifle exasperates. 'Please, open the indow,' she went on. 'I am suffocating. Your boots have een greased at sea with rancid tallow; they will not take the lacking, and—they are insufferable.'

He went to the window, unhasped the casement, and threw wide open, then stood looking out. He drew a long breath, nhaling the sea-air, fresh and free, that rushed in and fluttered ie gauze valance of the dressing-table.

'You are right,' he said huskily; 'it is close in here. One an hardly breathe at all here—not in this room only, but in ie parlour and the hall, on the terrace, in the garden, every- here within the garden walls.'

In the window hung a brass cage that contained a bull- nch. Richard put his hand to the cage-door, unfastened it, nd put in his hand.

'What are you about, Richard?' asked Josephine petulantly. 'Why do you not go on with the packing?'

He did not answer. The imprisoned bird had hopped on his finger. He drew his hand from the cage so steadily that the bullfinch did not attempt to leave his perch. Then he put his arm out of the window, and the bird remained, turning its head about and uttering an astonished or pleased cheep!

'What are you doing?' cried Josephine, and started to her feet. Her call, or the vibration, alarmed the little bird; it spread its wings and flew away. 'What have you done!' burst forth Josephine, throwing herself again into her chair. 'My Puffles! my poor Puffles!'

'The room was close, and the bird could not breathe,' said Richard. 'I felt for the poor little wretch—a sort of fellow-feeling, I suppose.'

'Richard!' she said, half crying, 'this is too unkind, too cruel of you! You knew that I was fond of the bird; that is why you have deprived me of him. I will never, never forgive you.' Then the tears came into her eyes—not tears of sorrow for the loss of her pet, but of mortified pride and of angry resentment. Her flushed face, her pouting lips, her swollen muscles, all proclaimed wrath, not grief. 'I wish,' she muttered—'I wish that we had never——'

'What do you wish?' he asked, facing her.

'I wish——' But she checked herself. Then, thinking that his feet touched her skirts, she brushed the latter away and tucked them under her knees, with passionate scorn in her action. 'Please, proceed with the packing. Lady Brentwood (*Ma'am*, as you call her) is not to be kept waiting an eternity, whilst you torment me with letting my pets loose. The horses have to be considered as well as she.'

'When do you return? To-morrow?'

'I do not know. I do not care if I stay a week to be free of my troubles.'

'What troubles?'

'O—troubles I have brought on myself—troubles past your comprehension.'

He said no more, but got out her box and began to pack. Whilst he was thus engaged he brooded on her words and said: 'I think I understand you.'

'I usually speak so as to be understood,' she replied.

'Josephine,' said he, 'why will you not allow me to go with you? I know very well that I am no company for grand

lks. I'm like a plain horn-handled steel fork that has lost s way, and got among the silver in the plate-basket. God nows, I do not desire to push myself where I am not wanted; ut the lady did wish to have me.'

Josephine laughed contemptuously. 'Absurd! She did ot want you, except as Samson, to make sport before the nilistines.'

'I do not believe you. The world is not so bad as you ppose.'

'Lady Brentwood was not sincere; she was laughing at u all the time she spoke with us.'

He shook his head. 'She's got a kind face and a kind ay, and I don't think so bad of her as that. As for the ords and Admirals! I'm not afraid of them. Men, be they er so high, always know the wally of a true man.'

'Wally!' groaned Josephine. Then in a tone of bitter ockery she said rapidly: 'O generation of wipers! Pass the negar.'

'What do you mean?' he asked, rising from her box on nich he was engaged, and standing before her, with his face d, the veins in his forehead distended and purple. 'Are you ughing at me? Scoffing at me, Josephine?'

'I merely repeat things I have heard.'

'When—where?'

'Oh, the other day I overheard you teaching the children text from Scripture that began, "O generation of vipers."'

'Well, I did not pronounce a word right, and so you scorn e? Is that about it?'

She shrugged her shoulders and made no reply. Her art was beating furiously. She linked one foot behind the her and kicked the footstool from her.

'The Lord's own words,' said Richard sternly. 'Even ey aren't sacred to you, not when a father is teaching them his little ones. What odds if the pronunciation of the ords be wrong so long as the words themselves be right?' e knelt again at her box and finished packing.

When he had done, she stood up. The sting of self-proach made itself felt in her heart; but she was too proud acknowledge that she had been in the wrong.

'Richard,' she said, 'you may go. Ring the bell to have e box taken down. I must dress myself hastily.'

When she descended the stairs a few minutes later, she oked about for him, but did not see him. He was not in

the hall, nor in the drawing-room. As she got into the carriage her eyes wandered in search of him; but he was not to be seen.

'Where is Richard?' she asked of her father.

He answered superciliously: 'He went loafing through the garden a minute ago.'

She settled herself beside Lady Brentwood.

'My dear,' said the latter, 'I am positive that lavender will thrive here.'

'What do you mean?'

'Do you not know? Where the wife rules, there the lavender flourishes.'

CHAPTER XXVI.

MOSQUITO STINGS.

When Richard left the house, he did not go to the cottage or to the yacht. He passed through the gate to the seawall, and stood outside the palisade of the garden, leaning against it, overshadowed by the boughs and fragrant flowers of a lime, looking out to sea. He could catch a glimpse of the drive; and as he heard the grind of the carriage-wheels on the gravel, he turned and looked, and saw Josephine depart with Lady Brentwood. Mr. Cornellis was also in the carriage. So, as he, Richard, was not suffered to go, Lady Brentwood had carried off Mr. Cornellis. In the opinion of Josephine, her father was suited to move in good society, to entertain Lords of the Admiralty; but her husband was not; he must be kept in the background, lest he should make himself ridiculous.

For the first time in his life Richard's bright and crystalline humour clouded. Perhaps he had caught the infection from his wife. He tried to look up into the deep sky, but his cap did not shade his eyes; the brilliancy of the light dazzled him; besides, his eyes were burning. He rested them gloomily on the tufts of sovereign-wood and sea-spinach that sprouted between the stones at his feet. He had controlled himself before Josephine with an effort; now his chafed temper swelled and tossed within him like a race of angry sea round Hanford Point. Flakes of red drove across his face, like the foam-bows driven by the wind on the rushing tide. His

muscles quivered and his pulses leaped. He could not go to the cottage till the first paroxysm of passion had passed away. A woman is glib with her tongue both in her mirthful and in her angry moods; she shoots out her words without much consideration. Her tongue is her natural weapon of defence. We would not blame her were she to use it only when attacked, in self-defence. The mosquito also has a sting; but it employs the barb not only to protect itself, but to goad those who sleep, or ignore its existence, into taking cognisance of its insignificant self. What a light and feathery being it is! how delicately slender, how buoyant on its transparent wings! As we lie on a bench in the sweet summer evening and look up into the skies, full of twilight, like silver resolved into vapour, and our souls mount to the far-off stars, whilst the song of the nightingale chanting among the poplars fills our ears, hmm—hmm—whisp! in an instant our faculties are drawn away from the ideal and transcendental to a minute gnat that has perched on us. Our peace is gone; the poison has penetrated our veins; irritation intolerable ensues; we tear with our nails, but cannot tear the irritation away, though we tear till the blood flows. Does the sting cease to vex in an hour? Oh no! it lasts for days, and only slowly ceases to worry and anger us.

Why did the mosquito light on us? We offered it no menace; we were not even thinking of flies; we were far away among the stars. Can it be that it affords pleasure to the mosquito to stab and inject an infinitesimally small drop of the most aggravating of poisons into our blood? Can it be that the creature stings us out of envy, because we were in spirit among the stars, instead of occupying our minds with mosquitoes?

It is said that female poisoners have made victims out of mere wantonness, not because they bore spite, but because it afforded them gratification to display their power. It is perhaps the same with the mosquito. Was the Marchioness de Brinvilliers the last of the female poisoners? By no means. The poisoners are as numerous now as ever; they fly about in clouds; they rise up out of every pool; they lurk under every green leaf; they hum in every room. Pshaw! We hulking men, what care we for these midges? Compare our size, our strength, the texture of our bones, the toughness of our skins, with theirs. It is absurd to suppose that we need fear and avoid them. Pshaw! What can a microscopic drop

of poison effect in the great rivers of our blood? Pshaw! How can such flimsy, merry-minded little creatures pierce these tough hides? So we argue, and next moment are writhing and tearing ourselves, and crying out in pain, like Hercules in the garment of Deianira. I have been to an apothecary, and showed him my hands and face covered with mosquito stings, and asked for something to neutralise the irritation. He laughed in my face, and said there was no remedy. So there is no remedy for the sting of that other mosquito; there is no alkali yet found strong enough to neutralise the drop of venom found at the end of a woman's tongue, thrust into the blood—not, maybe, out of virulence at all, but out of playfulness, out of wantonness. O the hours, the days, the months of tossing, of torment, even of delirium, caused by one little word at the point of a soft little red tongue, shot into the veins and curdling the heart—shot in, in a moment of vexation, without premeditated malice. We may run away from the tormentor, but we carry the poison with us. Perhaps the mosquito is surprised at the effect of its sting, and would recall the poison if it could; but it cannot; and it comes whirring its wings and tossing its plumy head and piping softly in our ears, asking to be allowed to apply its lips to the wound; but we shrink away, the lips frighten us—behind them lurks the sting. O ye mosquitoes, I pray you be pitiful towards us rude men! We are incapable of protecting ourselves. We cannot permanently abide behind mosquito curtains. But, alas! what avails a cry for mercy? As long as the world lasts, women must sting, and men must weep; and the sooner it's over, the sooner to sleep.

Richard stood under the flowering lime in which the bees were busy, leaning against the palisades, with heaving breast and hands clenched at his side, and brows that lowered and dripped with agony. Real physical pain was at his heart, a pain that affected respiration and pulsation alike, a pain that numbed his brain and hindered it from articulate thought. He had loved Josephine. An uncultured man looks up to a lady of refinement with reverence and worship, such as she herself can hardly understand. To him she is something so ineffably perfect that he is ready to become her slave, and ask for nothing in reward for his fidelity and adoration but a smile. It is the most unselfish, ethereal, of all love. It is like that which the Minnesingers felt for princesses in whose courts, beneath whose footstools they knelt and sang. To

Richard Cable Josephine had been such an ideal; he had looked up to her with infinite love, as to one unattainable; and yet in this looking up was associated a feeling of vast compassion for the girl in her loneliness, her ignorance of the highest aims of life, and a longing to touch her hand with respect and lead her into the right way. What a mistake he had made! He lead her! She had bewildered him, and he had lost his knowledge of the compass-points. He saw that he could be of no use to her, that he was to her an encumbrance and a source of daily irritation. She was out of ease when he was present; his voice scalded her ears; his attitudes offended her; his boots made him insupportable in her room. He set his teeth. A glimmer was in his eyes, like the light beneath a thunder-cloud. He would not bring his children into the house. They should remain with their grandmother at the cottage, and he would spend most of his time with them, and teach them Gospel maxims—the Sermon on the Mount—without suffering her to overhear and scoff at his lessons. No; on no account should they be brought to the Hall, where they might learn to laugh at their father, for his brogue, his boots, his blue kerchief. In the cottage they were encircled with simple and healthy surroundings, and were taught to look up to and reverence their father. He would not have them reared to an artificial life, to be made young ladies of, wincing at his *Vs*, and turning away their faces from his boots. He looked at these boots. They had been serviceable to him on many a rough night. It was true that the leather was greased, and perhaps the grease had not always been fresh. The boots had kept his feet dry when the waves washed the deck. Sailors cannot wear patent-leather dress boots.

Richard could endure a great deal; he was so humble, that he was ready to accept correction; he was so forbearing, that he could allow for the infirmities of the weak; but his patience had its limits. He could not endure the thought of becoming despicable in the eyes of his children. The notion that such an eventuality was possible had never before occurred to him; now it seemed certain, were his little ones to be brought into association with his wife. He put his hand to his head. His rough strong hand was shaking as though he were recovering from a long illness. A qualm almost like that of sea-sickness came over his heart; indeed, everything swayed about and under him. His knees were weak, and would hardly support him. He laid a hand on the top of the

palisade and rested his head on it. In a few moments the giddiness would pass away. He put out his other hand on the palisade and shut his eyes. Then he felt something alight on his finger and press it. He looked heavily up, and saw that Josephine's bullfinch had come out of the lime-tree and had perched on his hand. He shook the bird off; but little Puffles, after hovering about a moment, returned and re-alighted on his finger.

What did the bullfinch want? Was it already weary of its freedom and desired to be returned to its cage? Was it frightened at the vastness and complexity of the world into which it had been launched, and longed for the narrowness and simplicity of the world within bars? With Puffles it was other than with Richard. He chafed at the restraints which encumbered him on all sides, and the bird was frightened at its freedom. He looked at the bullfinch some time dreamily, wonderingly. He held his finger very still, and the bird began to polish his beak on it. Puffles was pleased to grip a warm hand instead of cold twigs. The pressure of the little feet and claws sent a thrill of pleasure along Richard's arm to his heart. In it was an appeal to his protection; and like his mother, Richard's heart at once responded to the appeal of feebleness. He raised his head and put his other hand over the back of the bird. 'Come, Puffles!' he said; 'each to his proper element. You, to bondage. I—I—God alone knows when and how I shall escape!' Then he went in, through the garden, very gently, holding the little creature covered with his right hand, and walking evenly. The bird made no attempt at escape.

At the pantry window stood the butler and the boy, looking out, whilst polishing the silver and glass; and they chuckled as they saw him come along. No doubt he looked absurd, walking slowly with one arm extended, and the other covering the tiny creature that rested on his finger.

'It's o' no use winking at facks,' said the butler, 'or trying to disguise 'em. Master ain't an atom of a gentleman. He don't look it; he don't feel it.'

When Cable reached his wife's room, carrying the little bird, he replaced the creature in its cage and looked about him. Well, it was not fair to her for him to give liberty to her pet without asking her leave. Perhaps he had aggravated her to speak more sharply than she intended; perhaps now she regretted what she had said.

'I'm glad the bird is back,' he said. 'She will be pleased, and think more kindly of me.' His angry mood gave way to gentler feelings. He saw that she had scattered her clothes about the floor as she had taken them off, and left her drawers and wardrobe doors open. He took up and folded her dress, shut the drawers and closed the wardrobe. 'I'm a porpoise in a whiting net,' he said. 'What a different sort of place this is from my cabin in the lightship or my room at the cottage! No nicknacks there. Well, I suppose I must accommodate myself to my shell, as the chicken said that had to be hatched. I can't make my shell fit me like the lobster.'

When a cool leaf is applied to a wound, the fever ceases for a while, but the relief is only momentary. Presently the fire makes itself felt as hot as before. The calmness that had come over Richard lasted only so long as the pressure of the little claws remained on his finger. No sooner had he left the room, than his pain and heat returned. The poison was in his blood. Little Puffles could not undo the mischief done by Josephine. The poison had penetrated to the heart.

He went out of the house once more, and through the garden to the seawall. As he walked he had his hands in his pockets; but suddenly recalling the offence he had given to Josephine by so carrying them, withdrew his hands and folded them before him. How many commandments were there, he wondered, in the social code? The moral was simple enough, contained in two tables. How would he ever master the many and complicated rules, many and complicated as the hieroglyphs of the Chinese tongue, where every word has its special character? A Chinaman learns to read as he learns to speak; from infancy, as his ear catches a sound, it is associated with a symbol to his eye. So a gentleman or a lady grows up amidst the intricacies of social life, and all its symbols and rules become familiar from early childhood. But was it possible for a man like Cable, in manhood, to enter into this sphere and speak and act according to its regulations? Was it not as impossible for him as to acquire Chinese writing and the Chinese tongue?

Then another current of thought set in through his brain. His hands had strayed again to his pockets, and in them turned over a few coins. He was now without a profession. He earned nothing; with the exception of a few pounds in the savings-bank, he had nothing of his own; he would therefore have to apply to Josephine for money wherewith to

feed and clothe and school his children—ay, and provide for his mother as well. There were small bills due to the grocer and dressmaker; there was the rent for the house. Must he go to his wife with these accounts and ask her to settle them? The thought was unendurable to a self-reliant, proud man. It galled him to the quick to think that his dear little ones, Polly's children, his mother, should be henceforth dependents, not on him, but on Josephine.

No; to this he would not submit. There was but one mode of escape from the difficulty—he must enter into some profession, in which he could earn sufficient for the support of his family. But for what profession was he now qualified? It must be one that was gentlemanly, or Josephine would oppose his proposition. And for a gentlemanly profession he was unsuited, because he was not by breeding a gentleman.

As he puzzled his head with these thoughts, he was roused by a slap on the shoulders from a heavy hand. He looked round and saw Jonas Flinders.

'How are you, old boy?' asked his brother-in-law. 'By Jakes, I'm glad to come across you. You're all with the top-sawyers now, and we in the pit ain't fit to be spoken with, I suppose.'

'You are not just,' answered Richard composedly; 'I have never shown any pride.'

'Well, you're so engaged, we can't get a sight of you. Now you're coming on to the "Anchor," I hope? All your chaps from the "Josephine" are there. You're not going to give them the slip, I hope?'

Cable started. He had forgotten the supper to the crew. After all, Josephine was in the right; he must be present at that. If he absented himself, he would give offence. Why did she not simply say so, and not insult and wound him?

'I fancy you'd forgot about it. My stars! you've got too grand to remember such little matters.'

'I had been reminded of it. For the sake of attending the supper, I did not go out with my wife; but it is true that for the moment I had forgotten. I was busy with my thoughts.'

'I hope they were pleasant. It don't seem as if they were, judging from your face. By gorra! as I came up, your face was a-twitching and a-wincing as if you'd been stung by some nasty wenomous creetur. But there—come along. Treat things unpleasant like Pharaoh and his host—drown 'em.'

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN THE ANCHOR.'

THE parlour of the 'Anchor' had a cosy look. Although the time of year was summer, yet on the coast the evenings were at times sufficiently cool to make a fire acceptable. On this evening a small fire of wreck-timber was smouldering on the hearth, emitting its peculiar gunpowdery odour, and the glow gave geniality to the little room, as a smile to a plain face. The window was small, with red curtains to it; and before the supper was over, the curtains were drawn and a lamp lighted. Some lumps of coal were put on the fire, bubbled and burst into puffs of flame.

Richard knew the room very well. He had often been in it, and had spent there many a pleasant hour. As he sat in it now, a sensation of relief came over him. He was once more among friends, among men of his own educational stamp, men he could understand, and who understood him; men who were not on the watch to find fault with him, who respected, and did not look down on him. Richard had always been a sober man; but he had been no teetotaler; he took a glass with his mates, and made the glass last a long time. He had never been a sociable man, but had always been kindly, ready to listen to yarns, and patiently hear puzzle-headed arguments, and laugh at jokes, and take interest in the affairs of his comrades. He was no talker, but a capital listener. When asked for his advice, he gave it modestly, and made no remarks if it were not followed. Should the talk take such a turn as offended him, he showed his disapproval by rising and leaving the room. On one occasion only had Richard occasion to speak out, and that was when his brother-in-law intercepted his exit. Then he said gravely: 'I cannot bear it, mates—because of the little 'uns at home. When I'm with you smoking, I take the smell of the 'baccy home with me in my jacket; but that don't hurt. But when I hear you talk this way, I'm feared lest the taint of it go home to my innocent children in my clothes. —No offence; I must go. There are six of 'em, and the youngest is a baby.'

Richard Cable, as all the men knew, was a long-suffering

man, slow to take offence, and never giving it. That fellow must be uncommonly provoking who roused Dick to anger. He could bear much chaff, taking it good-humouredly, and he did not resent, though he disliked, a practical joke. How his comrades would have marvelled had they been able on that evening to see into his breast, at the fuming, tossing fever that there worked, kindled, stirred up by a woman's tongue!

'By Gor, Dick,' said Ephraim Marriage, the mate, when the steaming grog was brought on the table with the white clay pipes, 'I'm glad you've come. Jonas said we should see no more of you, now you'd gone away from us for ever; but I didn't think it; I knew you better.'

'Give us a paw, captain, over the table,' said a sailor, glowing with affection and animation at the sight of the spirits and hot water and sugar.

'Every wessel,' said Moses Harvey sententiously, 'is marked with the mark of the port to which she belongs; it is C.K. for Colchester, and C.R. for Chichester, and H.D. for Hanford; and wherever she may go, into whatsoever seas, a-trawling, or a-drudging,[1] or a-coasting, she's known by her marks whence she comes and to what she belongs. Now, mates, our good friend Cable was built and launched here at Hanford; and though he may cruise away into oceans and seas and spheres to us unbeknown, yet wherever he spreads his sail, there it will be known he don't belong to no ports or harbours of them there foreign parts or spheres, but to us: he's marked H.D. right over his bows, and got it writ in his inmost heart, in the log o' his good conscience.'

A rapping on the table, a clinking of spoons, a stamping of feet under the table, and a 'Hear! hear! hear! Right you are, Moses.'

'I've heard tell,' continued Harvey, stimulated by these tokens of approval, 'that in disturbed and warful times, wessels sail and traffic under foreign colours. But I don't care what colours our captain, Dick Cable, may hoist; we look to his letters, not his flag; and we recognise our old friend and mate by his H.D. on his bows.'

Renewed applause.

Cable's heart was soothed by these tokens of welcome and affection and regard. These men said what they thought,

[1] 'Dredging' in the Essex fisherman's vernacular is 'drudging.'

and spoke out the feelings of their hearts. There was no humbug in them; they were honest and true throughout.

Perhaps Josephine was right when she said that Lady Brentwood had invited him to dinner only that she might laugh at him. Perhaps the Admiral, the Lord of the Admiralty, the Justices of Peace, the Baronet, would have been civil to him with their lips, to his face, to make jest of his manners and mode of expressing himself behind his back. He did not understand the ways of that class of life, and Josephine did. She belonged to it.

Then Cable stood up and pulled off his frock-coat, and put it aside on the cupboard. 'I can't bear to sit in it any more,' he said. 'It is like as if I were in a strait-waistcoat in an asylum. I'll sit with you, mates, in my shirt sleeves, as I've no blue jersey.'

'You put off the gentleman along with the coat when with us, eh, Dick?' asked Jonas Flinders.

'I never was, and never shall be, a gentleman,' said Richard with a little warmth. 'The making of one is not in me—what with my pockets and my handkerchief and my Wes. I'm a plain man, always was, and always will be.—They tried to put my hands into gloves,' he went on, waxing hotter—'kid gloves they were; and I busted 'em right down the back, as I've seen a taut sail go in a squall. They tried to get my feet into fashionable boots, and I was like a cat in walnut shells, or a Chinese lady, needing ladies'-maids to hold her up when she sets her foot to the ground.'

The men laughed. Richard, with shaking hand, refilled his glass. He was angry at the recollection of what he had undergone. He swallowed half the contents of his tumbler, and went on irritably: 'Whatever you do, mates, keep clear of polite society. It is like the Doldrums, where you never know which way the tide is running and from what quarter the wind will catch you.'

'Not much chance for any of us to get into it, captain,' said one of the men; 'the luck don't come to every one to marry an heiress.'

'Leave my wife out of the game,' said Richard hastily; 'I'm not alluding to her in any way. I'm speaking of polite society in general, and them as have the misfortune to swim in it. I've seen this day a bullfinch that wasn't content to live outside a cage, and liked to hop about from one dry stick to another. There are folks that have been bred and grown

up in social cages, and they are only happy inside of them. Give them a little red sand, and a few drops of water and some chickweed and a lump of white sugar, and they are content. They don't care for the green trees and the free wind, and the grass twinkling with morning dew. All that is barbarous to them.'

Richard had become loquacious. The fire burned in his heart, an angry resentment against the new world into which he had been introduced, and for which he was unsuited; and his heated feelings relieved themselves in words. His pride, which had been broken down, reared itself again.

'It must be uncommon irksome,' said Ephraim, 'having to wear a coat to your back all day, as if you were in church or chapel eternally.'

'It is not only that—you are tied and encumbered in everything, Eph!' answered Cable. 'When David the shepherd-boy wanted to fight Goliath, King Saul must needs clap on his head his helmet, and wrap his breastplate over his breast, and put greaves of brass on his legs. Then David could not get along a step, and he said: 'I cannot wear them —I have not proved them.' It is much the same with me. They're a-girding me and an arming of me, brass here, brass there, brass everywhere, and I am nigh on crushed with the weight.'

'It must be terribly inconvenient,' said one man, 'to have to wear a good cloth coat and waistcoat and trousers at meal-time, and instead of enjoying your wittles, to be a-thinking and a-pondering and a-considering all the time, lest a drop of gravy or a bit of butter should come on the cloth and spoil it. Bless my soul! what it must be to have the mind a-travelling over one's person like an inwisible cloth-brush cleaning off the crumbs and specks all the time one is eating!'

'I suppose,' said another man, 'you've got to be wonderfully choice what you say?'

'That's another of the wexing things in polite society,' answered Cable. 'Did you ever hear Tom Catchpool tell of the juggler he saw in India? He saw a native conjurer dance blindfold among knives and razors stuck in the ground with the blades upmost, where a false step would have cut him to pieces. He danced for an hour and did not get a scratch. For why? Because he was brought up to it from a baby. It is just the same in polite society: there every blessed letter of the alphabet sticks on end, sharp as a razor,

and I defy'—he beat his fist on the table—'I defy any man who has not been brought up to it to get along among them without getting gashed and spiked at every turn.'

'And,' threw in Moses Harvey, 'the wowels is the wust.'

'I've been aboard a wessel all my life,' said Cable grimly, 'but I can't pronounce *We* aright.'

'I suppose you live like a fighting-cock at the Hall?' observed Ephraim.

'There is enough there and to spare,' answered Cable. He emptied his glass. He flushed hot with the remembrance of the indignities he had undergone on account of his mode of eating. 'Polite society knows how to cook its food, but is mighty particular how you eat it. But there, mates, we've had enough about polite society. I've seen at Orford or Aldborough or thereabouts—I can't at the moment mind exactly where it was—a tree growing that folks say was planted upside down, and the roots have grown into branches, and the boughs have been converted into roots. That is what polite society is—the honest world turned topsy-turvy. You have my last word on it. God save the Queen!'

'When shall you be going another cruise in the "Josephine," captain?' asked Ephraim.

'I'll have Jim Cook to repaint the name of the yacht,' said Cable; 'she's not to be called the "Josephine" any more.

'Change her name!'

'Ay, change her name. You see, mates, it's the name of my—my wife, and I don't care to have it in every man's mouth. Besides, we none of us speak it aright. There's properly no Joss in it at all.—But there; you need not try to give it right. The name shall be altered to-morrow.'

'What will you call her, Dick?'

'The "Bessie"—that shall be her name henceforth.'

Then up stood Hezekiah Marriage, captain of a small oyster smack, and said: 'Fill your tumblers, gentlemen. I rise on my legs—on my hind-legs, gentlemen——'

He was interrupted by Cable, who exclaimed roughly: 'We are none of us gentlemen, I least of all, thanks be.—Call us mates.'

'Very well, Captain Dick,' said Marriage. 'I rise to my hind-legs, mates; I accept the correction with a grateful heart. We are not gentlemen; we don't belong to polite society; we are rough Skye terriers, every one of us. I rises'——He paused—he was not a fluent man. 'Gentlemen!—I

ask pardon, I mean mates—you have not all got your glasses brimming, and the toast I rises to propose is one that demands the—the flowing bowl.' He cleared his throat noisily and looked round. His face was moist, the strain of elocution was enormous. 'I rises on my——'

'All right, Captain Marriage; you've been a-rising on them hind-legs a score o' times; keep up on 'em, and don't come down again,' said Jonas Flinders.

'Allow me to get along as I can,' entreated the speaker, 'or I shan't get along at all. I propose the full and flowing bowl to be emptied to the health of Mrs. Captain Cable, the real old and original Josephine.'

'I object!' shouted Richard, starting up and striking the table. 'I have said already that I will not allow my wife's name to be brought in. I refuse to permit the toast.'

'Having risen to my hind-legs to propose it,' said Marriage argumentatively, 'I can't a-draw it in again. Toasts are not like snails' horns.'

'I will not have it drunk,' said Cable angrily. 'Do you want to offend me, and make me your enemy, Mr. Marriage? You all?'

'No offence is meant; the contrary was intended,' argued Hezekiah. 'How can there be offence in proposing or in drinking the health of Mrs. Cable?'

'I have said I will not permit my wife's name to be introduced here,' cried Richard. 'You have all heard me announce that.' He looked angrily round the table.

Was this the same Richard Cable whom all had known?—this irritable, touchy man? What had transformed his nature, once so placable? Only a drop of poison on a tongue-point introduced into his veins.

'Now, look here, mates,' said Marriage. 'The toast is out, and it is unconstitutional to haul it in again; but I'm a peaceable man, and I'll tell you how we'll compromise the difficulty—we'll drink the health of Mr. Cable and all his belongings.'

Richard was in that chafed temper that takes umbrage at trifles; but he saw that he had acted unreasonably, and he raised no further protest. The toast was drunk, but with an abatement of enthusiasm. Then he stood up to reply, having first fortified himself for the effort with his glass. 'Mates,' he said, leaning over the table, resting on his knuckles, 'I'm nought as a speaker, as you all know. I thank you for the

cordiality with which you have drunk my health. As I said afore, so say I now; I'm not a gentleman, and never will become one. Silk purses are not made out of sows' ears. I daresay you've all heard of Mahomet's coffin that hangs betwixt heaven and earth, held up by a lodestone. The coffin that contains the corpse is of iron. Well, mates, I'm not altogether like Mahomet, but I am in part. I'm lugged up by the feet; but my head and heart are down below, and the position is neither becoming nor comfortable. Moreover, in the place where my feet now are, in the elevated region of polite society, my feet are objected to because my boots have been greased against sea-water, and they will take no polish, and are otherwise objectionable. I'd like to draw my feet down to my head, mates—but—I can't. I thank you all.' Then he emptied his glass and sat down.

'I rise to my hind-legs once more,' said Marriage, blowing with excitement and nervousness, 'because I have a duty to perform. I meant no offence before, and I rise now to make what amends for any mistake I may have made. I'm a poor hand at speechifying. It is like running in a boat over the flats when the tide is setting outwards, and you feel beneath you the farther you go that the water is a-shallowing and a-shallowing, every pull that brings you nearer the shore. I rise, however——'

'Drat your legs, can't you leave them out!' shouted Ephraim.

'The toast, my mates, that I rise—that I rise to propose is one, I'm sure, you will all drink with the greatest cordiality and with three cheers. The toast, mates, I rises on—I mean I rises to propose, is to them dear little childer, seven in all, nestled as doves under Master Cable's spreading vine. I say, mates, though we be rough old water-dogs, that we 've got tender hearts, and we respects and admires a lovely sight, such as them seven little innocents, beginning with Mary down to the baby, all brought up as they ought to be, in the fear of God, and in order and love and peace; and I do but express the feelings of all here present when I say—God bless the darlings all.'

Then the room rang with cheers; and Richard, with the tears rising into his eyes, leaned over the table and clasped the hand of Hezekiah Marriage and shook it again and again and again; but he said not one word; he did not thank him, for his heart was full and he could not speak.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE WORKING OF THE POISON.

When Richard Cable left the 'Anchor,' the hour was not late, but he had drunk more than his head could bear. He had always been an abstemious man; consequently, a glass or two more than what he usually allowed himself greatly upset him. On this sole occasion he had not exercised that self-restraint which was habitual with him, for on this evening the fire in his blood had urged him to slake it. But that was not all. He had felt real pleasure in being once more in congenial society—in society which exercised no thraldom over him, in which he was relieved from the suspicion that he was being watched and criticised. This sense of liberty after irksome bondage impelled him to relax, and for once to forget that there were limits he had been accustomed to set himself. He appreciated the kindliness of the men he was with, and he sought to meet them on their own ground, to show them good-fellowship. As the fever in his veins cooled and his wrath passed away, he became cheerful, and for the first time for many days—happy. The mediæval church was wrong in ruling severe fasting during Lent, for her dutiful sons, who had wasted themselves during forty days, broke out in paroxysms of orgy at Easter. It is said that children brought up under stern discipline become dissolute when emancipated from parental governance. Cable had been for some time under discipline peculiarly galling, and now that for a moment he was free, he forgot that his liberty was not absolute.

Richard left the 'Anchor' on the arm of Jonas Flinders, his brother-in-law. He was in good humour. 'The yacht shall be rechristened to-morrow,' he said. 'She shall be called henceforth the "Bessie"—that will please my mother; she is Bessie; and the baby is called after her. The best of boats shall bear the name of the best of women and the dearest of babes.'

The air from the sea was cold; it fanned the hot face of Richard. The sky was without cloud. There was no moon, and many stars were visible; not that the sky was crowded with them, as on a winter night, because there was twilight in the heavens; nevertheless, many showed. The evening star

twinkled. Sirius turned red and green and gold, flashed and winked like a diamond. The night was so cool, the breath from the sea so fresh, that Richard's hot head seemed to him to steam. 'There is the Big Bear,' said he, leaning heavily on the arm of Jonas, and pointing to the constellation known to every child. 'There he is turning about on the end of his tail. He's got his nose high up now—he'll have to bring it down before morning. Often have I watched him go round like the sails of a windmill, when I've kept watch on board the lightship.—Jonas! I think I'm turning about myself, like the Great Bear; but my head is the point on which I revolve. It's a wonderful consideration to me, Jonas, that the Great Bear always knows what to do with his front-paws. They are the pointers. Draw a line through them wherever they may be, and it touches the north star. And when you consider that the Bear is never still, always turning about on the tip of his tail, I say it is marvellous! There is instinct for you. I couldn't do it. My paws are never in place. If I stick them into my pockets, I am wrong. If I put them down straight and stiff, one on either side of me, I'm wrong again. If I plant them on my knees, it is worse than ever. If I draw the back of one of them across my nose, it is as bad as murder. Then, Jonas, whatever shall I say about my hind-feet, as Hezekiah Marriage calls them? I can't keep them anywhere where they do not give offence. I've curled them in a sort of knot under my chair where I've been sitting, and I was told I looked absurd—ill at ease. I've stretched them out straight before me, and I was informed I was uncouth. I've put one on one side of my chair and the other on the other side, and that was not right neither; and then the boots have been so smeared with rancid tallow, to keep out the water, that they won't do neither. I'm well aware, Jonas, in the sphere to which I'm elewated, that I'm looked on much as a great ungainly Bear; but I wish in that same firmament I knew how to dispose of my extremities. Oh, the agony of mind those extremities of mine have caused me! Why is it, Jonas, that no beast or bird or creeping thing has any thought about or difficulty with his extremities, but only man?—and we're made to believe he is the lord of creation.—I tell you what I think, Jonas—you're not laughing at me. It is in polite society only we get laughed at and sneered at. It is not my feet, but *her* eyes that are the pointers; they are for ever pointing out my extremities, turn them about and put them

where I may. Take her bright brown eyes and draw a line through them——' He checked himself, and said hastily: 'I'm not speaking of my wife; I'm not going to have her alluded to in this company, nor her name named, because your mouths have not been fashioned to pronounce it right, nor can your heads understand her ways of going on, and I won't have any commenting on and criticising of what you do not understand. We'll turn the conversation to the "Bessie."'

The cold night-air was affecting him. He who was usually so little of a talker had become loquacious; but then for many days he had been afraid to speak lest he should commit a solecism, and now that the fear was removed, he talked a great deal.

'There is the light out yonder—or two, is it?—where I used to be in the boat. They have put another vessel there now, and another man is in it. Lord! Jonas, I almost wish I were back at the old work, cleaning of the lamp, instead of always being a-snuffing and cleaning and polishing of myself—and never able to get myself right, always smudges somewhere, and rust-marks, and smoke and smut. Out yonder, one day passed much like another, and all peaceable. True enough, we had storms, and I was tossed about; but there never was any storm and tossing about inside of me; and now it is all inward, and none without. I'd rather the billows ran mountains high and the breakers foamed over my head, than have the seas so heavy within.—What creatures we are, Jonas! When I was on the boat, I was always longing to be ashore with my little ones; and when I was ashore—somehow, I wasn't altogether sorry when my time came to return to the ship. So, I guess, when a man's a bachelor, he longs to be married; and when he's married, he looks back on his singleness with great longing. We always wally what we haven't got. Man is a perwerse animal, Jonas.'

'Polly was a good wife. You think of her at times still—though she wasn't rich and accomplished.'

'Polly!'—Richard tried to recover himself; he was lurching against his brother-in-law. 'Polly was an excellent wife.—But, Jonas, I will have no comparisons drawn. If you mean to insinuate anything against my present wife, you make me your enemy for life. Polly was everything that was right and good in her way; and I have no doubt that—that *she*—her name is more than we can pronounce right, we uneducated folk—*she*—— What was I saying? She also is all

that is excellent in her way. We do not compare them; they are different.—Let us turn the conversation. The Great Bear stands in the sky, always a-turning on the end of his tail, which is a moral lesson to us always to keep the conversation a-turning.'

The two had nearly reached the cottage. Richard's talk became more disjointed, his walk less steady. The cold air ensuing on the heated atmosphere of the tavern parlour exercised its usual effect. He had left the 'Anchor' exhilarated; he was now intoxicated.

Was this the same Richard Cable who was wont to return home with raised head and even step, and whistling, to let his little ones know that their father was coming to them to kiss them ere they closed their eyes in sleep? Was this the same Richard Cable now reeling along the road maundering nonsense? What had occasioned this change? Only a drop of poison infused into his blood. The boys in Æsop's fable threw stones at the frogs, whereon one of the tribe raised his head out of the water and said: 'What is fun to you is death to us;' and so may many a man croak in his pain, when merry creatures pelt him with hard words: 'What is fun to them demoralises me.' Richard was already demoralised. His self-respect had met with a mortal wound. This self-respect was the stay which had held up all his other virtues. Strong in his manly dignity, he had been gentle, patient, self-controlled, modest, and temperate. Josephine had struck at his sense of moral dignity, and when that gave way, every grace that had leaned on it went into the dust at the same time.

A Spanish bull-fight is by no means the even conflict of equally opposed antagonists that we supposed in childhood. The bulls have no inclination to fight; their disposition is peaceable. It is only after persistent and prolonged efforts that the matadores can goad them into pugnacity. They endure without resistance the stab of knife and the prog of lance. They turn their heads away, so as not to see the fluttered scarlet cloaks. And we men are much the same—placable, indisposed to gore, ready to rub our noses against the hands of our gaily tricked-out tormentors, against hands wet with our blood. We thrust our stupid heads against their breasts, asking to be patted on our flanks or rubbed between the horns. We do not want to fight, not we! We would not tear away a ribbon or a lace, or trample on a

bugle off the frippery that adorns our tormentors. We have been stabbed, but we submit to wounds, and when next goaded, limit our protest to a subdued bellow. Possibly, we shake our heads in threat, but we mean no harm. When at length, with cruel ingenuity, our pretty persecutors drive barbs into the open wounds, and these barbs are armed with crackers and squibs and Catherine-wheels; and when they dribble Greek-fire and flaming sulphur into our sores, then, in our agony, we toss our heads and paw the ground, and strike the barriers of plank with our horns, ripping them like rushes, and we race, bellowing, blinded, mad, round the arena—then woe to those who stand in our way; we are no longer responsible for our actions.

Bessie Cable was sitting in the cottage by the table, in the front kitchen. She had been cutting out a dress for baby, a little pink dress with white sprigs on it, a very small pattern; and Mary sat on a stool beside her, hemming the pieces together. The cut-out scraps lay on the table, some ready for Mrs. Cable to sew together. Near her feet was the cradle, in which baby lay asleep.

'O grannie!' said Mary, 'will she not look sweet in this pink dress? And she will have a red sash and red bows on her little shoulders. She will be a sweet little rosebud, will she not?' Then Mary stooped over the sleeping child. 'Do, grannie! look at her,' she said. 'Was there ever such a darling! What a pretty little dimple she has! She is laughing in her sleep. I do believe she is dreaming about her new frock.—Do you think, grandmamma, that babies know what is going to happen? I suppose the angels do, because they are so near God, who knows everything that is to be. I daresay little baby-souls that have just come down from God can see a little way into what is going to happen, and that is why Bessie is laughing now—she sees the pink frock in which she will be so smart on Sunday.'

'I do not suppose babies see into the future, dear Mary, not even little pink frocks with carnation bows. I do not think it would be well for them. They would see many sorrows and pains; and then, instead of smiling in their sleep, their tears would trickle over their cheeks. They are happy because they are blind to what is to be.'

'Grannie,' pursued Mary, 'how do babies' souls come to them? Father took me outside one night and let me see the falling stars, and he said they were baby-souls coming down

out of heaven from the hand of God. Why do the falling stars always go out when they come near the earth?'

'Because, I suppose, they enter into the little bodies.'

'But—grannie,' Mary went on—she was a thoughtful child, and asked more questions than Bessie Cable had the wit to answer—'how is it that there are no rising stars? They are all falling, and none flying up. It ought not to be so. If we see the little bright souls come down when babies are born, then, when good people die, we should see their souls like bright stars mount up to heaven.—Have you seen them do that?'

'No, dear, never.'

'But why not, grannie?'

'Because the souls get so dust-clogged and darkened and stained with their sojourn on earth, that the brightness is dimmed, and God must clean them again before they shine.'

Mary considered a while, and then said: 'I don't think father's soul will need much cleaning, it shines so bright now.'

'Hark!' said Mrs. Cable. There is his tread.—No; it is not his tread.'

A hand on the door; it was thrown open, and Richard Cable staggered in, without his coat, which he had forgotten, and left on the cupboard in the 'Anchor' parlour. His face was red, his hair disordered, his eyes wandering.

Mary looked up, sprang to her feet with a cry of delight, and with open arms prepared to run to him. His mother laid her work on her lap, and looked at him with doubt and alarm. Mary was arrested by something in his appearance so unusual as to frighten her.

'Richard!' said Mrs. Cable, 'what has happened?'

'She shall be christened to-morrow,' he replied; 'christened to-morrow—and called henceforth the "Bessie."'

His mother knew what had occurred. The tone of his voice, the drawl in his speech, his position lurching from one foot to the other, declared it.

'Father dear,' said little Mary, 'how strange you look!'

'Mary,' said Mrs. Cable hastily, 'go away. Run upstairs at once.'

'Stay a bit,' ordered Richard. 'Say your prayers first. Repeat your Scripture lesson, "O generation of wipers," but be very scrupulous about the *We*. Polite society lays great

weight on it. I won't have it laugh at my Mary because she can't say the *We* right. I can't do it myself——'

'Go upstairs immediately,' said Mrs. Cable, rising and catching Mary by the hand. 'Your father is—is unwell. You must go instantly to your room. Say your prayers by yourself, and pray for him.' She hurried the child to the stairs.

Mary went reluctantly; but she was a docile child, and did not venture to disobey. On the stairs she stood and blew a kiss to her father from her little palm. 'Grannie,' she said, 'he is not very unwell, is he? He will be well to-morrow.—Dear father, try to be quite well soon.'

'Halloo!' said Richard, staggering to the table, 'what have we here? A new frock for little Bessie! Ha, ha! Shall we have the yacht new christened to-morrow? No disrespect meant to my wife. No slur cast. But we can't pronounce the name right, so had better not pronounce it at all.' Then he went to the cradle. 'Bessie!' he said, 'come along and crow over giving your name to the yacht. A fine boat that answers her helm, as a racer does a touch on the bridle.' He stooped, put his hands into the cradle under the child, and raised it out of its crib. '"There's grog in the captain's cabin,"' he said, swinging the sleeping child aloft, '"there's water down below."—Halloo! at sea already—life on the ocean wave and on the rolling deep! Up we go! Down we go!' He lurched over.

'For heaven's sake, Richard,' cried his mother from the staircase, where she stood holding Mary's hand—'Richard, let the baby alone! Put her back in the cradle.'

'Don't you fear! The "Bessie" shall rake the stars with her topmast, and dance in the foam of the ocean. Shan't she, my baby? Up she swings with straining timbers, down she goes!' He lost his balance, fell over the cradle; and the child dropped from his hands on the stone floor, before Mrs. Cable had time to unlock her hand from Mary's clutch and fly to catch the babe from his uncertain hold. The little creature uttered a cry and was still. But oh!—with a shriek, piercing, tearing through the house, frightening the children in their beds, the father picked himself up on his knees and clasped his hands, one on each side of his head, sobered in one moment of supreme agony and remorse. He knelt as one turned to stone, with his eyes riveted to the white motionless child, lying on the pavement, his face turned to the hue of death. Was the little one killed? Was it severely injured?

'Run, run for the doctor!' again ordered Mrs. Cable.

Then Richard staggered to his feet like one suddenly roused from sleep, and yet under the influence of a dream. Still in his shirt sleeves, and without thought to put on his hat, he went to the door, and ran. He stayed at the doctor's door, but he did not wait for him and return with him to the cottage. He ran on, ran for an hour without stopping in one direction—towards Brentwood Hall.

CHAPTER XXIX.

CUTTING THE CABLE.

JOSEPHINE'S spirits went up like a cork in water when she left Hanford. She liked Lady Brentwood. She was fond of society, and the society met at Brentwood Hall was usually agreeable. Lady Brentwood was an admirable hostess; the baronet, a cheery, kind man, who rather petted and flattered Josephine. But these were not the prime causes of her exhilaration. She was rejoiced for a few hours to be free of Richard, who was to her a constant cause of anxiety and annoyance. She, in her way, was feeling the same reaction that swept over Richard when he came among his friends at the 'Anchor.' She asked herself now why she had married him, and was not able at once to find the true answer. She had, in fact, taken him for several reasons. She never had really loved him; but she had been grateful to him, and she had been attracted by his simplicity, integrity, and manliness—by the contrast he presented to her father. But perversity had had its part in bringing her to marry Richard. She knew that by so doing she would anger her father and offend her aunt; and having lost all respect for both, she went headlong in a course which, because disapproved by them, she argued must be right. Without any fixed standards of right, she was swayed by her impulses, often good, but sometimes exaggerated, till all the goodness was lost. She had felt her need of a guide; but Richard was useless to her; he was a drag, an encumbrance, a cause of perplexity. Now, she recognised the justice of her father's opposition, and regretted

that she had not received it with respect. In her self-condemnation she was drawn towards her father as she had never been drawn before. She had revolted against his contemptuous disregard for truth and cynical disparagement of sincerity. Now she began to see that he was not wholly in the wrong. Truth, sincerity, are raw and rude virtues, not to be taken up in their natural state in the lump, but to be minced, and spiced, and rolled into forced-meat balls, or tucked into pâtés, and garnished and glossed over, and served round as a hors-d'œuvre. Life is not to be sustained thereon; they are to be picked at and taken in small portions at the end of a fork.

Naked truth is a savage virtue fit only for naked savages, suitable to an age when men ate acorns and beechmast. Civilisation from its first initiation was a covering up and disguising of truth. No cultured man speaks the bare truth to his neighbour, but rubs off its edges and smooths and polishes it. The bare truth blinds like the sun, and must be looked at through smoked glass. The perfectly true man is insufferable to every man he comes in contact with. Aristotle may have called the perfect man *tetragonos*, four-square, but such a man is full of angles, which impinge on and bruise his neighbours. Everything in life is full of disguise; truth is enveloped in as many coverings as a Chinese ivory carved puzzle-ball—the charm lies in the sculpture of the coats, not in the pip within. Our clothing, from the first apron of leaves, is disguise; our speech is the veil we throw over our thoughts; the courtesies of life are the figments which interpose between us and our fellows, to prevent our coming to blows. These thoughts passed through Josephine's brain; and she began to admit that her father was not so much in fault as she had supposed, and that she was premature in condemning him. She gravitated towards him, now that she was in this humour; and his quick observation showed him that he had acquired an ascendency over her he had not previously possessed.

When they were at Brentwood Hall, some time elapsed before dinner, whilst their hostess was engaged. Then Josephine took her father's arm, and they wandered together into the conservatory. He saw that she desired to speak with him on what was uppermost in her breast, yet was shy of opening the subject. 'Do you care for begonias, papa?' she asked. 'I think they are not attractive plants. They have nothing but their colour in their favour.—Oh, do look at

the maiden-hair fern. How prettily it is grown in cork along the walls; and see! it springs up luxuriantly in every cranny between the joints of the pavement. It will not flourish thus with us.'

'It wants warmth, and hates a draught. To every plant, a proper climate is needed that it may thrive. Bring the coarse bracken in here, and it will spindle; put a maiden-hair out of doors, and it will languish.'

'What a pity it is, papa, that there is no managing a fernery at our place. The pipes heat the vines and flowers; and if another house were added on, there would not be heat enough to warm it. It is a pity Cousin Gabriel contrived his greenhouses so badly that there is no enlarging them without complete reconstruction.'

'My dear, we should build our houses and shape our futures without corners for pities to lodge.'

'What do you mean, papa?'

'I mean, that we should well consider what we are about to do; and then, when we have acted, we shall not be exclaiming: "What a pity! what a pity! I did not see this before." In all our plans, we should contrive to let the pities be outside, like the vents for sewage gas.'

Josephine knew that her father was thinking of her and what she had done. 'We cannot always help ourselves; the pities will come.'

'They *may* come, where forethought has been exercised; where it has not, they *will* come.'

'And when they are there?'

'We must get rid of them if we can.'

'That is easier said than done,' observed Josephine.

To which her father remarked in answer: 'Where there is a will there is a way.'

They walked on together for some little way without speaking; but presently, Mr. Cornellis said with a tone of voice that conveyed a sneer: 'Among the many pities that occur, there is one strikes me with peculiar force at this moment—that the Wadi el Arabah is dry.'

'Why so?'

'Because, if there were water-communication between the Gulf of Akbar and the Dead Sea, that intelligent and adventuresome sailor, your good husband, might be sent in the yacht to Jericho.'

'Papa!' Josephine sighed.

'As there is not,' pursued Mr. Cornellis, 'might he not be induced to attempt the north-west passage? There would be, to be sure, the chance of his getting crystallised in an iceberg—like a mastodon.'

Josephine shrank from her father; she unlocked her arm from his; his tone offended her.

'One thing is certain,' said he. 'Richard is reduced to abject misery; he is weary of life among us. I give him his due. He knows he is out of his element. He wants but a touch to convert his rotary orbit about you into a parabola, with a perihelion at remote intervals.'

He waited a few minutes for her to speak, but she said nothing. Her face was troubled.

'It is said,' continued Mr. Cornellis, 'that if you give a man rope enough he will hang himself. You, my dear'—he looked at her out of the corners of his eyes—'you have been given plenty of Cable, and are beginning to throttle—in self-defence you must *cut your Cable.*'

This was all that passed between them, but it sufficed. Her father had shown Josephine the only way out of her present difficulties. The alienation must be made complete; she and her husband must separate without scandal, with mutual consent. Each was in a wrong position, and felt uncomfortable. But would Richard as readily agree to this arrangement as herself? He loved her, and she did not love him. He had his nice notions of duty, which might keep him dangling about her. But there was a greater impediment than this—his children. Would he be induced to leave them? Would he be persuaded to depart with them? How could she even suggest to him that he should do this? For the first time she felt an impatience of the children boil up in her. 'Little cumbersome pests!' she said, as she put on her bracelets, but she did not allude to the bracelets.

She was beautifully dressed at dinner—a creamy white silk with orange flowers and lace; round her neck was a chain of pearls. She looked strikingly beautiful. Her clear olive cheek was flushed with excitement, and her large brown eyes were full of light. By day the white would not have suited her complexion; but it was otherwise at night. She was taken into dinner by the baronet, and she exerted herself to be agreeable. Sir John was a very old friend, whom she had known since she was a child, one who had humoured and encouraged her, and laughed at her sharp speeches. Not a

word did he say about Richard. He expressed no regret that he was not present. He asked her about her voyage, about Heligoland and Bremerhaven, and Hamburg and the Danish Isles, which she had visited on her wedding tour. He had a yacht of his own, and at one time had gone about in it a good deal; but of late years he had felt his age, and given up the boat to his son. As we get old, we do not lose our love of the amusements of our youth; but we feel the labour that attends them, and the effort we make in taking our pleasure neutralises the pleasure itself.

On the other side of Josephine sat Captain Sellwood, who had taken into dinner a heavy young lady. The captain made a few cumbrous attempts at conversation, which fell dead, and were followed by periods of silence.

'I hear the discharge of minute-guns,' said Josephine in a low tone to him. 'You and your convoy make no way. I am a fast clipper, and have come to the rescue.'

She was in good spirits. She was sorry for the captain, whom she had affronted when he proposed to her, and she was eager now to make all the amends in her power. Accordingly, when not engaged with Sir John, she threw herself with energy into the difficult task of waking up and maintaining a conversation with Captain Sellwood and his partner. She was only partially successful. She was like a boy trying to fly a kite when there is little wind. When he runs and lugs at the string, up goes the kite; when he desists, it heads downward and lies inert upon the grass. As the captain was at her side, Josephine was not subjected to the gaze of his solemn ox-like eyes. This was a relief to her; she could not have endured the scrutiny. With some, when they look at you, you can see in their eyes what ideas they have formed, favourable or otherwise, concerning you. There is a certain amount of satisfaction in that; but with Captain Sellwood it was not possible to do so; there was no reading anything in them.

Josephine was playing an unreal part. At the bottom of her heart lay a leaden burden of care and mortification, but she gave no token of it in her conduct. Her face was full of smiles, her eyes of humour.

'When are you going back to India?' she asked of the captain.

He did not know exactly—he had a long leave of absence, on account of ill health.

'General torpidity?' asked Josephine.

'A torpid liver—yes. Perhaps I may have to leave the army.'

Then she turned to Sir John Brentwood, and noticed Lady Brentwood bowing; so she rose, and the ladies followed her into the drawing-room. As she passed her father, she caught his eye; it said plainly: 'You are queen here now only because Richard is absent.'

The drawing-room of Brentwood Hall was a long room, occupying the entire garden front of the mansion. It was lit with tall Queen Anne windows, now covered with pea-green curtains embroidered with yellow and brown heart's-eases. The room was panelled and painted creamy white, the mouldings picked out with gold. All the furniture was in white and gold and pea-green. The ceiling was remarkably rich with wreaths of plaster-work flowers and fruits in the style of Grinling Gibbons. Between the windows were full-length family portraits, some of great beauty—giving colour and depth of tone to a room otherwise pale in its decorations. There was one famous painting there, by Gainsborough, of a Lady seated by the seashore under a tree, listening to the murmur of the waves in a shell that she held to her ear. She was in white satin, with a black lace scarf thrown lightly over her head. Blue bows adorned her dress. Gulls flitted over the deep-blue sea in the background. The expression of the sweet face was one of melancholy; and a look of yearning for something far away was cleverly depicted in the eyes. That something far away was her husband, Sir Beaulieu Brentwood, who hung between another pair of windows—a gorgeous figure in crimson satin. He went by the name of Red Ruin in the family, because of the disasters he had brought on it. The picture had been painted in Italy. The dress was fantastic, worn at a masquerade, borrowed or hired from the *garde-robe* of some theatre—red stockings, slashed trunk-hose and jacket, a hat with a crimson feather.

'You are looking at Red Ruin,' said Lady Brentwood. 'Fortunately for the family, he fell abroad in a duel. He had eloped with a Roman princess, and was run through the body by the husband. If he had lived a year or two longer, the Brentwoods would now be nowhere, the estate sold, the family irretrievably impoverished.'

Josephine studied the Gainsborough.

'His poor wife,' said Lady Brentwood, 'looks like Patience on a monument, smiling at grief. He deserted her, treated

her shamefully, hardly allowed her enough to live upon; and yet she forgave everything, and was, I believe, the only person who wept true tears at his death. I do not think I should sigh, and look so longingly for his return, had Sir John played me these tricks. I am cast in another mould. Some folks would be glad enough to be rid of their husbands. You, my dear, have not been married long enough to know what a relief it is to be quit of them for a while. Bless me! what is all that noise in the hall? What a clatter the servants are making.' Just then a footman entered. 'Thompson,' she said, 'what is the meaning of this? Are you all gone mad?'

'Please, my lady, might I speak to your ladyship a moment outside?'

'What is it? I insist on knowing. What has happened? Speak out, Thompson.'

'My lady, there's—a man, a fellow got into the house in his shirt sleeves and without his hat.'

'Well, turn him out. Is he drunk?'

'We can't make out, my lady, exactly. The butler has had a deal of work getting him into the housekeeper's room.'

'How vexing; send for the gamekeepers, and have him expelled. Is he insane?'

'We don't know what to make of him, my lady. He says he's come after his wife.'

'Wife—wife! She's not here. He must be drunk.'

'He's very hot and excited, my lady; he says as his name is Cable.'

Lady Brentwood started.

Josephine's blood rushed in a wave to her heart, and then poured through all her veins, like the bore in the Severn. For a moment the room spun round and she saw nothing distinctly; but she speedily recovered herself, and with crimson brow and eyes that flamed with anger, she said: 'Let me go, dear Lady Brentwood. I will see him.' Then she left the room, with firm foot but bounding heart, and pulses in her temples that smote like hammers. 'Lead the way, Thompson!' she said haughtily. 'The man desires, possibly, to speak with me.'

The footman conducted her along a passage and down steps to the parlour of the housekeeper, a room that smelt of preserves. She was followed by her hostess, ready to retire if need be, but desirous to be at hand to prevent scandal.

In the housekeeper's room was Richard Cable in an arm-

chair, the butler and the housekeeper by him endeavouring to compose him. He was in a condition of great agitation. His face hot, his hair wet, he was panting for breath; his sleeves were unbuttoned at the wrist, his tie twisted to one side of his neck. His collars were limp and crumpled.

'If you will kindly leave me alone with him,' said Josephine, controlling herself, and turning to the housekeeper and butler, 'I will send him away.' Turning round, she saw Lady Brentwood in the doorway. 'Dear Lady Brentwood,' she said, going a step towards her. 'I am ashamed and grieved that you should have been disturbed. Let me manage this matter. I will dismiss him very speedily.'

Her hostess at once withdrew and the servants disappeared. When she was left alone in the room with Richard, she stood opposite him, looking at him with angry brow and eyes that darted flashes of fire. Her teeth, her lips, her hands were clenched. Her eyebrows were contracted, so that they met above her nose. His breast was heaving; drops of sweat stood on his brow and rolled down his face like raindrops.

'Well,' she said at length, 'are you going to speak and inform me as to the reason of this new outrage? Are you bent on driving me to curse the day that I ever took your hand to raise you out of the gutter?'

He did not answer; he could not; his breath was spent; the blood boiled and sang in his ears. Perhaps he did not hear her.

Why had he come? He did not ask himself this question. It did not occur to him to ask it. He had come, impelled by a natural instinct, not by any articulate reason. She was his wife, the one who stood nearest to him in the whole world. He had committed a crime; he was conscious of an agony of remorse and terror which filled him. To whom should he fly in such an hour of supreme pain but to his wife, to pour into her ear the story of his trouble, to ask her sympathy, her assistance?

He had not stopped to consider; had he done so, he might have hesitated; he might have doubted whether she was a person ready to meet him with open arms and comfort him in his sorrow. But he did not stay to think; he ran straight forward, thrust on by remorse. His mind was dazed with despair, incapable of thinking, and so he acted upon natural, unreasoning instinct. To whom other than a wife should he turn—the refuge of a tortured soul, the proper sharer in every

sorrow, the only one who with a ray of love could enlighten the darkness which enveloped his brain and heart? Now his wife stood before him, with bare bust and arms, in white silk and lace and flowers, wearing pearls about her neck and sparkling bracelets on her arms, with long white gloves, neatly buttoned, and a fan in one hand.

Richard Cable looked at her; and now, for the first time since he had started on his run, did the thought emerge out of the confusion and pain in him, that this beautiful, dazzling, stately creature was not one to solace, advise, and help him.

'What is it?' she asked in a hard tone: and as she spoke there sprung up in her mind the recollection of her father's words, 'Cut your Cable,' and she saw that the desired opportunity had arrived.

She waited a moment, and then said again: 'I have asked you twice, what is the meaning of this insult?' Then with concentrated bitterness: 'Are you too drunk to speak?'

He raised his hands and clasped his head: 'I have killed ——or hurt——'

'Whom?'

'Little Bessie! I let her fall—on the stone floor—little Bessie!' Then he broke down, covered his face with his hands, and sobbed.

She stood unmoved before him. She waited a moment for him to recover himself, then in the same hard tone she asked: 'What have you come here for?'

'For you.'

'For me? Why? Bessie is no child of mine. Go back!'

'Will you not come with me?'

'I—I go with you!' She laughed contemptuously. 'Ici je m'amuse parfaitement bien. You do not understand French. It does not matter—you can gather the sense.' She turned her back on him and left the room.

CHAPTER XXX.

NOT TO BE RESPLICED.

On the modern stage, when persons have to disappear or properties to be removed without interruption of scenes, a steam or smoke is raised, or veils of imperceptible gauze are let down, behind which the requisite operations can be performed unobserved by the spectators. Similar appliances have been in use on the social stage for many generations to disguise what we do not wish to be seen. It was so on this occasion. The movement of social entertainment went on uninterrupted; the gentlemen came from their wine; the tea was handed round; ladies sang and performed on the piano; Lady Brentwood had agreeable things to say to all her guests; the smoke of small-talk and the veil of etiquette screened the unpleasant episode which had just been enacted, and which had created some disturbance.

The hostess herself knew no particulars, and she was careful to ask no questions. When Josephine reappeared, she covered her embarrassment cleverly by thanking her for having fetched her music, and insisting on her taking her place at the piano and giving the company one of her charming songs. Josephine went to her portfolio and took out the first piece that met her hand without particularly noticing what it was. She knew perfectly all the pieces she had put together, and there needed no choosing where music is used not as a delectation, but as a cover to the voices of talkers. When she took her place on the stool and unfolded the paper, she found that she had selected the Mermaid's song from *Oberon*. She struck the first chords listlessly, and then regretted that she had taken this piece, for with the air came over her the recollection of the lightship and of Dicky Cable's whistle. 'I will never, never sing it again,' she thought as she closed it. 'That is the last of the Mermaid.'

Next day, Lady Brentwood persuaded Josephine and her father to prolong their visit over another night. There was a garden-party that afternoon, and another dinner in the evening, when a very musical acquaintance, a man who wrote critiques in some of the papers, a man steeped in Wagner to the chin, was coming; and Josephine, said her

host, would be sure to like to meet him and discuss Wagner with him and the merits of her favourite Weber. Josephine was a heretic; she despised Mendelssohn, thought him a great prophet of musical commonplace, and had shocked Lady Brentwood. 'My dear,' she said, 'we will refer the matter to Mr. Wayland Smith; you must stop for dinner, and hear what he has to say about Mendelssohn. I daresay you may be right about these Songs without Words, but none but a master could have written the Scotch Symphony.'

So Josephine and her father remained; and at table her hostess managed to set Mr. Wayland Smith next to the bride, though he did not take her in to dinner. Josephine was passionately fond of music, but she had not had extended opportunities of hearing much. Her father took her to town occasionally to concerts and the opera; but, after all, the circle of operas performed in town is a small one—*Trovatore*, *Roberto*, the *Prophète*, *Rigoletto*—now and then *Lohengrin*, *Trovatore* again, *toujours Trovatore*. Mr. Wayland Smith had gone through a German course, hated Italian music, and had much to say about composers of whom the English musical world knew nothing, and whom, therefore, it despised—Marschner, Lorzing, Nicolai, &c.

Josephine spent a very enjoyable evening. She sang for Mr. Wayland Smith, and very goodhumouredly and frankly accepted his criticisms. He looked over her portfolio, and with a blue pencil scored some of her pieces. 'When you get home,' he said, 'tear these to fragments and strew them to the winds; it is worse than waste of time to play rubbish.'

Josephine quite forgot about Richard Cable and his injured child in the interest she felt in the conversation of the musical critic. She made him write down a list of pieces for her to get and learn.

'I knew,' said Lady Brentwood, 'that you would enjoy yourself when I persuaded you to stay.'

'Dear Lady Brentwood, I have not spent such a pleasant evening for a long time. I forgot all my worries.'

'You have worries?'

'Like every one else. But—I am glad now to learn that I am not alone in my heresy. Mr. Wayland Smith shrugged his shoulders over Mendelssohn, and said the Songs without Words were fit only for school-girls.'

Josephine had banished her worries from her thoughts

while at Brentwood Hall; but when she returned to Hanford they returned with renewed force to disturb her peace. Her conscience, which had slept whilst away from home, now uncoiled and stretched itself. She felt qualms at the recollection of her treatment of Richard.

Her father had asked no questions about what had happened; he seemed to have divined all. As she descended from the carriage, and he gave her his hand, he said: 'Take care—no resplicing of cut Cables.' In no other way did he allude to what had occurred.

Richard was not at the house when they arrived. He did not come out into the porch to meet her. She hardly expected to see him, yet she felt disappointed that he was not there.

'Is Mr. Cable about the garden?' she asked of the butler.

'No, ma'am; he's not been here for some time.—There's been an accident, ma'am.'

'Is the child much hurt?' she inquired with a slight tremor in her voice.

'I do not know, ma'am, for certain. Shall I send the boy down to inquire how the young lady is?'

Young lady! Tiny Bessie a young lady! What condescension of John Thomas to call the poor little child, the sailor's babe, a young lady!

'Never mind,' she answered. 'I daresay I shall step down myself and ask. The case is not serious?'

The butler bowed, put his hand to his mouth to cover a cough, and said in an apologetic tone: 'Certainly not, ma'am.—only the spine is injured, and the child will be a cripple for life.'

Josephine shuddered and turned white. Then she went upstairs; her hands shook as she removed her bonnet. What should she do? Ought she not to go at once to the cottage? She and her father had lunched at Brentwood, and did not return till the afternoon. As she sat and thought what line of conduct she should pursue, the first bell rang for dinner. She dressed hastily. It was too late for her to go then. Perhaps she would run down after dinner.

Josephine could not eat anything at dinner; she picked the food in her plate, and sent it away. She could not talk; she had lost her interest in Wagner, and her prejudice against Mendelssohn. Her aunt asked whom she had met at Brent-

wood, and how she had amused herself; and her father watched her; she changed colour during dinner several times, and complained of the heat, though the evening was cold. She was thinking of Bessie, the poor little blue-eyed, fair-haired child, that had put its little fingers to her mouth, and whose palm she had kissed. This little creature crippled for life—a whole future darkened! How had the accident happened? Richard was so careful, how came he to let the child fall? Josephine knew how his heart was wrapped about his little ones, how especially dear to him was that innocent babe, and she knew that he must be suffering acutely. He had been suffering whilst she had been enjoying herself. Whilst she had been discussing Mendelssohn with Mr. Wayland Smith, he had been eagerly questioning the surgeon as to the life of the sufferer. Richard would never forgive her for her want of sympathy. She had cut her Cable indeed—through and through, with sharp knife and remorseless hand.

She could not remain with her aunt in the drawing-room after dinner; she went into the hall and threw a shawl over her head and wrapped it round her neck. Now she was cold, shivering. A moment ago she was hardly able to breathe, and was fanning herself because of the heat.

Her father came out of the dining-room. 'Whither are you wandering, my pretty maid?' he asked. 'After poppies and nightingales?'

'Papa,' she said, 'I must go. It is wicked not to make inquiries. I cannot send; I must go myself. Richard will never forgive me.'

'Well,' said he coldly, 'it is best as it is. Good words will not mend broken bones. You have missed the chance, if you sought reconciliation. It is too late now. I will go to the cottage and make inquiries. Let matters take their course. Penelope unstitched at night what she had sewn in the day. Do not you try to sew up what you have unravelled.' He took her shawl off her shoulders. She submitted, and went back into the parlour to her aunt. He was right; it was too late.

Josephine retired early to bed; she was too uneasy to talk or settle to anything. When in bed, she could not sleep. Her mind became restlessly active; every trouble doubled itself in bulk. Wrongs done her grew in grievousness, her own faults darkened in colour. When she thought of the

annoyance Richard had caused her by his ill-considered action in coming to Brentwood, her veins glowed, her head throbbed, and her eyes burnt in their sockets. She could not forgive this—this humiliation, to which he had subjected her before her hostess and the servants of the house. If he took offence at her conduct, it was unreasonable of him; the aggravation had been excessive. If he refused to be reconciled, it was well that it should be so; she could be happy without him; it was abundantly proved that she could not be happy with him. Next moment, she thought of Richard running to seek her, to pour out his grief into her bosom. She saw him, under the starlit sky, in his shirt sleeves, running with the sweat streaming from his face, and his breath issuing in snorts through his nostrils. Why had he come for her, instead of going straight home to his child? He had run to her in perfect reliance on her goodness of heart and ready sympathy. She was ashamed of herself; she had wounded his heart where it was most susceptible. She resolved, in spite of her father's advice, to go to the cottage next morning, acknowledge her fault, and make her peace with Richard. Then she saw rise up before her in the darkness of her room the white form of Gainsborough's Lady Brentwood, with the shell to her ear, listening to the roar of the sea, with a far-off, wistful, longing look in her eyes. Would she—Josephine—ever feel such a longing for her husband as Lady Brentwood had for Red Ruin? No—that was not possible. A woman might lose her heart to a rake in satin and velvet, might forgive infidelities; but she could not love a common sailor, and pardon a lapse in grammar. Red Ruin had deserted his wife, but he did not put his knife in his mouth; he had eloped with a princess, but he had held fast to the letters *h* and *v*. Therefore, it was quite permissible and possible that Lady Brentwood should feel tenderness for Sir Beaulieu; but she, Josephine, could never experience such a yearning of the soul for her husband, were he to be absent and become indifferent. The clock struck four before she fell asleep.

When she woke, she had come round to her father's opinion—that the breach having once been made, it must not be filled in. She regretted that she had appeared unfeeling in the matter of little Bessie; but we cannot pick our occasions, and if Richard came to interrupt her with unwelcome news when she was engaged—she very naturally lost

her temper and spoke unsympathetically. A rupture with Richard was inevitable; the occasion had come; it was not quite such as she would have chosen, but having come, she must take advantage of it. It would pave the way to a separation, and Richard might be induced to leave Hanford. If he would not go, she was resolved to depart herself; they could not live together in the same place in different houses and moving in different social spheres.

In this mood she abode the whole forenoon; but after lunch, she sat in the garden by herself. Aunt Judith had gone upstairs to take a nap; her father was away with the agent who had called. Then a reaction set in, and she felt that she had been heartless. Her better self prevailed. Her pride stood in the way for some while, but went down at last. She tried to stay it up with the thought that Richard could not care much for her, or he would have returned to the Hall; but her efforts availed nothing.

She rose from the garden-seat, went through the gate, and walked to the cottage, without saying a word to any one.

The elder children were at school, to be out of the way. Mrs. Cable had gone to the surgery for medicine; and when Josephine entered the house, Richard was there alone in the kitchen, watching and soothing the baby.

He looked up as she entered. He was on one knee by the cradle; the afternoon sun streamed in at the little window on his face and dazzled him, so that at first he was unable to distinguish his visitor. Josephine noticed a change in him. His cheeks seemed to have fallen in; his eyes were hollow, and his hair had lost its spring and curl. The temples stood out, but the flesh had sunk into pits beneath them. He looked ten years older. But she saw that there was change of another sort in his face as well. The expression was altered. The light, the trust had vanished from it; its frank kindliness had disappeared. Across the brows lay deep furrows, and the mouth was contracted. The man was not so much oldened as embittered.

'Richard!' said Josephine, 'I have come to know the truth about dear little Bessie.'

He started at her voice; the furrows on his brow became deeper, and his teeth clenched, giving his jaw a heavy look it never had worn before. He put up his hand to shade his eyes from the sun, and he looked steadily at her for a minute without answering. In the shadow of his hand, his eyes looked

large and threatening. Presently, in a strangely altered voice he said: 'Bessie is no child of yours, and concerns you not.'

'I beg your pardon, Richard,' said Josephine, after a constrained pause. She was hurt by his rebuff, though she acknowledged to her heart that it was deserved. 'I am sorry that I spoke petulantly the other night; but you must acknowledge that you did a very unwise thing—certain to exasperate me. You put me in a most awkward dilemma.'

She waited for a reply. None came. 'Tell me, Richard, is poor dear Bessie gravely injured? I have heard no particulars. Tell me how it happened.'

'How it happened!' he repeated hoarsely, and rose to his feet, because he could not bear the sun on his face as he spoke with her. 'Ay! I will tell you how it happened.—Stand off! Do not come near the child. Away from this side. The shadow of you has fallen on her and fallen on me already. Your shadow blights.'

In truth, she had stepped into the sunbeam and had intercepted it. Now she moved on one side; she was humbled, not greatly, nor had she changed her determination, bred of her father's advice, to separate from Cable; but she was touched and pained by the sight of the suffering child, and its equally suffering father.

'I will tell you all,' he said in a tone charged with suppressed thunder. 'You were right when you said at Brentwood that I was drunk. It is true I was drunk when I did it. It was because I was drunk that I let my Bessie fall. I had rather, ten thousand times, have broken my own back and lain a crippled, tortured creature thus—through an eternity—than have hurt her. That God knows—if—if He knows and cares for aught that goes on below.' He did not salute, as he named the Almighty, as in the former times.

'I am very, very sorry, Richard.'

'I do not want your compassion,' he retorted fiercely. 'I loathe it—I despise it. It was your doing that my poor baby lies here——'

'Richard,' interrupted Josephine, with a flash of anger at what she conceived his injustice, 'because you forgot your self-respect and drank, and let Bessie fall, am I to be blamed? This is too much.'

'I do blame you,' he said. 'It is all your doing. Was I ever drunk before? Never—never! My mother can tell you that. And why did I drink at the "Anchor," but because you

had stung and insulted me past endurance! I forgot my self-respect! I had none. You had kicked it and trampled it in the dirt. You had killed it. I always held up my head and could check myself. I never did anything that could bring shame on my face, and tears in my mother's eyes before, because I respected myself. But you would not rest till you had beaten my self-respect down and ground it into dust. I drank because of the pain in my heart, and to forget what you had done to me. Then—after poor Bessie was hurt—I ran to find you. Now, I see I was mad or drunk to run to one so heartless, so cruel; but in the moment of my despair, I forgot all the wrong you had dealt me, and remembered only the tie that bound us. I ran to you, because I was burning with thirst, as a man in a desert runs when he sees far away green leaves that promise a well. I ran to you for pity and love, and you mocked and beat me from you.' His breath came with a hoarse rattle from his labouring lungs. 'And now you have come to see the wreck you have made; not of my sweet baby only—but of me—of *me*.' He came up to her with every muscle in his face and throat distended, and with clenched hands and nerves that stood as knots in his wrists and arms.

Josephine stepped back. 'Are you going to strike me, Richard?'

'No,' he said, 'I do not touch women. I almost wish I could seize you by the throat and wring your venomous tongue out, as I might tear out the sting of a wasp. I love you no more. I loved you once, loved you!—you stood far above me as the silver moon. I thought you the most beautiful and holy and pure of beings; and now I see your soul is full of ugly pits and scars and blemishes; and your light has no warmth in it—it chills, it drives a poor stupid man like me crazed—so crazed that I have crushed and nigh killed my child. So crazed am I, that I have lost all I had once that made me happy—my content, my peace of mind, my trust. I have looked up at you, and been blasted; and now—I cannot look up at all.' He clasped his hands over his head, and stood with widespread feet and elbows, glaring at her.

'I pitied you with all my heart,' he continued, 'when you once told me that you could not look up—and then, in my folly, I thought I would take you by the hand and hold you, and put my finger under your chin, and speak to you of love and faith and the trust of a little child to a loving Father, till

your tossed heart grew still, and its fret passed away, and you raised your eyes to what is above us all. But I never, never supposed that you would drag me down and blind me, so that my power of looking up should be taken from me.'

He trembled with vehemence as he spoke, and Josephine was silent; she quailed before his indignation. Then he was silent, standing looking at her; and she glanced at him, to see if there was any softening in his face, any forgiveness in his stern eyes.

'Can you not see, Richard,' she said, 'that you tried me beyond endurance? I may have lacked consideration for you, but you also failed in thought for me. Forgive me.'

'No,' he answered; 'never—never!'

'Then,' she said, 'if that be so, it is best for us to part—to separate. We both of us made a mistake. I did not know what I was about when I took you; and you over-estimated your powers when you accepted me.'

'Very well,' he said. 'We part; we see each other no more. But the past can never be undone; it can no more be repaired and made straight than the back of my poor baby, who is crippled for ever.'

'You blame me unreasonably,' remonstrated Josephine; 'you are blind to the wrongs done to me. Nothing is easier for a man who has made a mistake, than to toss the responsibility on to the back of another who is too weak to defend herself. Let me kiss little Bessie, and then I will leave you.'

'No,' he answered, 'you shall not touch her, nor go near her.'

Then in at the door came his little troop of girls, returning from school—six, and as they entered, the sunbeam lit one golden crown after another. The sun's ray lay along the floor. Richard pointed it to his children. 'Mary, lead the way; all of you follow her; keep along in the sunbeam, and so come to me. Leave the lady in the shadow, in the dark; do not step out of the sunbeam to her—do not let her come near you.'

The docile children obeyed, walking in line, bathed in pure light, taking care not to put one little foot into the shadow.

Richard waited till they had all come to him and were gathered round the cradle, looking lovingly, expectantly, somewhat wonderingly, up at him. Then he waved his hand to Josephine, and said: 'Go out! Hanford Hall is your home, and this cottage my home. I banish you from my roof,

as you have driven me from under yours.—Go!—Would to God, when I shut the door on you, I could drive the thought of you out as well, and be rid of the evil you have brought on me and mine, as I rid myself of your presence!'

CHAPTER XXXI.

GHOSTS.

A WEEK passed, and Cable did not reappear at the Hall. Josephine hardly expected that he would, but she half—more than half—wished that he would. He had loved her; she knew that, and it mortified her to think that his love had died so easily. She did not wish to live with him on the first footing; but she did not desire to part from him in anger and unforgiveness. She made no second attempt to see him. She nursed her resentment at the injustice she conceived he had shown, and hugged herself in her pride. It was not for her to step down to him. She had asked his pardon, and he had refused it. Now, he must come to her, and acknowledge that there had been fault on his part.

Mr. Cornellis said not a word. Everything was progressing as best accorded with his wishes. He might spoil, he could not mend matters by putting his finger to them. Josephine's indiscreet marriage and this speedy separation were most convenient to him. She was married to a man who could not interfere with him. He was left with the Hall as his home, and Josephine's fortune pretty well at his disposal. A husband of her own class of life would have taken the management of her affairs into his own hands, and would have required him and Judith to find some other home.

He did not understand Cable. He had visited him without mentioning it to his daughter, and had made him a handsome offer, to induce him to leave the place. His offer had been indignantly rejected. Why, Mr. Cornellis could not see. He supposed that Richard wanted to make better terms, and he was ready to offer them, but waited to see whether, on reconsideration, Cable would not come to his terms. Like all unprincipled men, he was incapable of admitting the existence of noble springs of action in others.

One morning, he came into the parlour with real surprise and perplexity in his face. 'Josephine,' he said, 'what do you think has happened? That Poor Richard of yours has given us the slip; he has gone off with all his chattels, living and inanimate.'

'Gone, papa!'

'Gone, and joy go with him—gone in the yacht. He has kept the plan to himself. Last night, he cleared out, live-stock and all, his mother and all the litter; and the vessel sailed this morning early; she went out with the tide.'

'Papa!—you do not mean this! Gone! Gone whither?'

'That is more than I can say; let us hope, to explore the North-west Passage. We will send no expeditions after them. If the polar bears eat them, may they find the Cables great and small to their taste; they are not to ours.'

Josephine made no response. She was too surprised to speak, and not a little distressed. Richard gone, and gone without a farewell—gone for how long? Gone, possibly, for ever. Something rose in her throat and choked her. It was well, perhaps, that he had departed; but it was not well that he had gone without taking her hand in both his, looking into her eyes, and then, with broken voices, asking each other's mutual forgiveness for the past mistakes and estrangement.

After remaining for some time silent, thinking, and half disposed to cry, Josephine said: 'Papa, do make inquiries. I must know whither he is gone; I cannot endure uncertainty.'

'You will not charter a vessel and sail after him?'

'No, papa; but I want to know where he is. Has he left no message, not a note, for me?'

'Not a word, which is perhaps fortunate: a word would have been pronounced, and a letter spelled wrong.'

'Don't speak like that, papa—it—it pains me.'

'Indeed! You have become sensitive very suddenly.'

There is a kind of woman widely dispersed throughout the civilised world who not only eats nothing but veal, but looks upon it as her proper destiny to bleed calves and reduce their flesh to a condition of veal. To their minds, veal is the only allowable food: the woman who touches beef is to be shunned as a dangerous person. To suit the taste of these women, everything must be reduced to a condition of veal—the life-blood, the colour, the warmth, be bled out of it. These women precipitate themselves, as by natural gravitation, into the arms of ministers of religion, because they find in their

minds the nearest approach to intellectual veal, and listen in sweet complacency to their sermons, which are elocutionary veal. Their favourite reading consists of insipid and harmless novels, in which is neither fire of passion nor spark of originality. To feel deeply, to think independently, are to them tokens of a beefy nature, demanding the lancet and the letting of blood. They delight in pale colours, half-tints, weak morality, milk-puddings, and afternoon teas. If they could get their tea to draw without the water being raised to a boil, it would please them well.

A century ago, every man went to the barber in spring and was 'let blood;' and our grandmothers all underwent a similar veal-producing process, morally, spiritually, mentally; nowadays, a few dashing calves kick up their heels and frisk about the field and refuse to submit to have their jugular cut.

All respect to the good women who go about with their lancets and little measures for blood; veal is an excellent meat; we must be thankful to them for producing it; but they exceed their province, they excite our remonstrance, when they insist on our eating nothing but veal. The best meat may pall on us, when we have no variety, and to some stomachs, veal is positively indigestible. But these veal-eating women are apt to be censorious, and to damn—but hush! the word is too strong—to condemn everything that contains all but a modicum of blood.

Aunt Judith was a veal-eater: she was a worthy woman, of narrow intellect and commonplace mind. Her brother was somewhat of a trial to her; her niece, a very grievous one. The boldness of character, the independence of thought in Josephine, frightened her. She could not understand her brother. More than half his sarcasms glinted off the surface of her mind, incapable of receiving them and feeling their point.

Josephine sat with her aunt in the afternoon, but was scarce conscious of her presence. Her mind was away on the sea, following the yacht over the blue waves and the foaming white horses. In which direction were the bows turned? What was the plan in Richard's brain?

It is a strange fact that a woman rarely appreciates the force of her own stabs. She regards the wounds she deals as light matters, to be easily patched over and quickly healed. That they should go down to the bone, be liable to fester—that they should leave permanent scars, never enters her

head. So now, Josephine laid little weight on the provocation she had given; and she resented the conduct of Richard in leaving her without an interview, as an undeserved injury.

Aunt Judith broke in on her reverie by saying: 'I wonder when Mr. Cable will return. Perhaps he has taken the children a sail for change of air. I feel a want of a change myself.'

'I do not think he will return,' said Josephine. 'He has taken the furniture of the cottage with him.'

'What has made him do that?'

'He is no doubt going to make a home elsewhere.'

'Why should he leave Hanford?' asked Judith.

'He has been uncomfortable in this house; he is not accustomed to the restraints of our mode of life,' replied Josephine.

'Uncomfortable! The dinner has always been well cooked. What more can he desire?'

'It was not the food which disagreed with him.'

'It is a pity that he should go, considering who he is,' muttered Judith Cornellis.

'Who he is? He has been a fish out of water.'

'I do not mean that,' said Aunt Judith. 'Considering who he is, he ought to be here. Of course he has told you about himself and his origin?'

'I do not understand. Of course I know——'

'Then you know that in common justice he ought to be in this house. I think Gabriel behaved very badly in the matter. I know I have not much cleverness; but I can see that Mr. Cable has been hardly treated. Your father says that man is an intelligent animal, and woman also—intermittently. I suppose I have an intermittent interval of intelligence now and then; and it does seem to me very hard on Richard Cable that he, being the son of Gabriel Gotham, should not have this house and estate as his own; or, at all events, that he should not have been provided for independently.'

'Richard—Gabriel Gotham's son?'

'Yes, of course. He must have told you the story. Your father did not wish you to know it before you were married; but now that you are Mrs. Cable, there is no objection to our talking about it.'

'Richard never said a word about this to me. I am quite

sure he did not know who was his father. Yes—I am positive—he told me that himself; and he never said what was false.'

'He did not know? Nonsense, my dear; of course his mother told him.'

'Aunt, I am convinced to the contrary. You do not understand Mrs. Cable. She is very proud, as proud as if she were a lady. And Richard feels so delicately, that I know he would ask her nothing.'

'Mrs. Cable always was a proud and reserved woman. She refused a very handsome allowance that was offered her by the family, when the marriage was annulled.'

'Gabriel and she were married?'

'Yes; they were married in Scotland. He ran away with her from Newcastle. It was an unusual course, and therefore very wrong, and it brought after it the natural consequences of all wrong-doing.'

'But, aunt, how is it, if they were married, that Mrs. Cable did not live with Cousin Gotham, and bear his name?'

'Because the marriage was annulled. By Scottish law, those who are married must have resided a certain number of days in the country. They had not been the full time by five hours, so that the marriage was declared illegal.'

'But—how monstrous!—why did not Cousin Gabriel come with her to England and get married again? That would have made all right.'

'He found that he had made a mistake; and he took advantage of the legal flaw to slip out of the marriage.'

'But—Aunt Judith—the child—I mean Richard?'

'My dear, of course, as the marriage was invalidated, Richard was illegitimate. The marriage was annulled before he was born.'

Josephine started from her chair and went to the window.

'When Gabriel married Bessie Cable, he was young and inconsiderate, and soon discovered they were an ill-assorted pair. His father and uncle used their influence, and he made no objection to a separation.'

Josephine's face flamed. She stood at the window looking out.

'You see now what I mean,' pursued Judith Cornellis. 'If it had not been for that slip of five hours, Richard Cable would be Richard Gotham, and Squire of Hanford.'

'It was infamous—infamous!' muttered Josephine.

'I cannot say that it was right of Gabriel not to acknowledge him, or at least to leave him a provision in his will. But then—as you married Richard, all seemed to settle itself practically, and the injustice to rectify itself; but now, all is wrong again. You perceive, my dear, how wrong it is to take a course which is unusual; it lands in all kinds of difficulties.'

'It was infamous—infamous!' repeated Josephine.

'I would hardly use so strong a term,' said Miss Cornellis. 'It was inconsiderate, perhaps, of Gabriel Gotham, and a little failing in justice to Richard Cable. But perhaps Gabriel considered that as Bessie Cable refused everything that was offered her, she might influence her son to adopt the same obstinate and unreasonable conduct.'

'She comes out best—far, far the best in the whole ugly story,' said Josephine vehemently. 'How could Cousin Gabriel be so base—so shabby?'

'My dear, it was a most unsuitable match. If you and Richard had been married in Scotland, and there was a flaw of five hours, would you not be glad now to seize the occasion?'

'No, no! It was despicable; it was taking advantage of the poor woman's ignorance.'

'I am sure that Gabriel was equally ignorant at first. It was only when the matter was looked into that the flaw was found.'

'Aunt,' said Josephine, crossing the room, pulling a withered flower out of a vase, then going to the window again, and then to the table to arrange the books—'aunt, I feel like a robber. I have driven Richard away out of this house. I have taken all the money, all the land, everything to myself, which by equity belongs to him.'

'I wish you would not dash about in the room like a bird that has got in and cannot find its way out. Sit down, and talk of this matter easily.'

'I cannot. I cannot keep my hands or my feet quiet. I am tingling in all my nerves. I feel as if I had committed a dreadful crime. If I tease you, I will go out. I must speak about this to papa.'

'My dear—on no account!' exclaimed Miss Cornellis, in a tone of alarm. 'He would be very angry with me for mentioning it to you.'

'But why was I not told before? How long have you known this?'

'Oh, for many years. It has been a family scandal, that has been hushed up.'

'I ought to have been informed of the circumstances. I would never have accepted Cousin Gabriel's estate.'

'You could not help yourself. It was left, not directly to you, but to trustees for your use.'

'It was wrong in you, in my father, not to tell me everything. I cannot remain still. I irritate you with my pacing about. I cannot help myself. I must see papa.'

'He is out now, and will not be in for some hours.'

'That is as well. I will go to the windstrew and sit there. I am so agitated, so angry, so surprised. This is sprung on me. I have been shamefully treated. I ought not to have been kept in ignorance.'

She swept out of the room. She felt the necessity for being alone. This strange revelation was fraught with consequences not to be gauged in a minute. What was that which Mrs. Cable had said about the cuckoo turning the little birds out of their parent's nest? She was the cuckoo; she had taken to herself the nest that of right belonged to Richard; she had done more—she had driven him, his mother, and children, out of their own modest cottage as well. Could she sit still and ruffle her plumes, and spread her feathers, and occupy the nest that was not hers by right, leaving them outcasts?

Why had her father kept the secret so closely from her? She shrank from the conclusion. Why, knowing what he did, had he counselled her to insult her husband and drive him away? She shrank from the answer she made to herself. At once, with great determination, she resolved not any more to ask advice of and be guided by her father's opinion. She must think out the situation for herself, form her own resolution, and act on it, in defiance of every remonstrance from him or Aunt Judith. *He* would stand in the way of her doing what was just, and *she* would object to what was unusual. Josephine sat on the windstrew, her head spinning, hot rushes of anger sweeping through her arteries, followed by cold qualms of heart-sickness. As she thus sat, her fingers plucked at the breasting of bricks, peeled away flakes of velvety moss, scratched out scraps of mortar, picked

away chips of brick, and flung them over the unprotected side among the broken potsherds. She looked over and saw a mouldering collection of garden refuse—old geranium roots turned out of their pots, and half-decayed flower-sticks, the fragments of a shattered garden vase of terra-cotta, the accumulation of years of broken flower-pots—a home for the slug and the centipede and the wood-louse. This was the bed on which Gabriel Gotham had fallen, a bed that truly symbolised his mind.

Josephine could not shake the thought of Gabriel out of her head, now that she had looked on the place where he had fallen and met his death. As she sat on the windstrew, with the smell of decay steaming up from the refuse-heap, his feeble, shivering ghost seemed to rise out of it and shake its hands deprecatingly, and jabber an appeal for pitiful consideration. She had been throwing the bits of mortar and brick down where he had fallen, and with them had cast hard and reproachful thoughts at the dead man. She could not thank him for what he had done for her; he had enriched her at the cost of a gross injustice committed on his son. What an utterly mean, selfish creature Gotham had been! His roundabout way of compensating Richard through her had been on a par with all his tortuous methods through life.

She could not endure to remain on the windstrew surrounded with sights that brought Cousin Gotham before her; she would go to the cottage, to a healthier atmosphere, and satisfy herself whether her father had spoken the truth. It was possible that Mr. Cornellis, in all things false, had deceived her in this particular also. So she went out at the garden gate and along the seawall. This was her shortest way, and it suited her best. She did not wish to be seen in the road; she thought that everyone she passed would look reproachfully at her. She could not endure to encounter their eyes. She went along the wall to the sandy path that led from the village to the shore, then by the moat to the bridge, and over the bridge into the garden. All was there as if nothing had occurred. The beds were in beautiful order; the vine on the roof showed a hundred little bunches of swelling berries. This year no little children would sit upon the stages of the ladder, looking for the purple fruit their father would pass down to them. She had spoiled that pleasure for them. There was the slope with the bed of

thyme and marjoram and mint, where the little ones sat in the sun, and baby Bessie went to sleep with fragrant herbs crushed in her little hands. She had spoiled that pleasure for them likewise. The scarlet-runners that Richard had staked were in bloom, in scarlet, and there were no little eyes to admire the lovely flowers.

She went to the house and tried the door. It was fast. But she knew how that there was a loose pane in the scullery window beside the back door, which could be removed, and the hand thrust in and the bolt drawn back. Cable had told her of this contrivance, by means of which he could enter into his house at all times without disturbing the inmates. She removed the pane, and easily unfastened the door. Then she entered. The house was deserted, and almost wholly cleared of its contents; but it was unlike most abandoned dwellings, for it had been cleaned and tidied before it was left. The few things that remained, hardly worth removal, had been placed in order. There was a plain solid deal table in the centre of the kitchen that had not been removed. Against the wall, in the corner, was the cradle, reversed, the rockers upwards. 'How like Richard,' thought Josephine. 'He has turned the little crib over, that the dust may not fall into it.'

He had not taken the cradle away. Bessie was grown almost too big for a cradle, and he would never have another baby. A slight quiver passed from Josephine's heart to her finger-ends.

The brick floor had been swept, the hearth tidied, the cinders were brushed into a little heap. Something white showed among them. Josephine knelt on the dead hearth, put her hand to the ashes, and extracted some scraps of card. They were her mounted cabinet photograph, torn twice across, downwards and sidewards, with a firm hand. So had Richard taken the thought, the memory of Josephine out of his heart and cast it from him for ever. A pang shot through the breast of Josephine, as though his hand were on her heart and were tearing it twice across, downwards and laterally. She threw the scraps of the despised portrait on the ground, then stooped and picked them up. 'He would not wish any scraps—even these—to litter about;' and she replaced them among the cinders.

There was no resentment in her bosom now: all her wrath against Richard had died away; her sense of wrong

was swallowed up in the thought of the great injustice done to him.

She wondered whether she could find anywhere in the house a photograph of himself. She had never seen one. He was too modest to think of being taken; but it was not improbable that his mother had insisted on his being photographed when he was younger, and there was a chance, a poor chance, of a copy being left behind. She ascended the staircase and looked about the bedrooms. There were nails in the walls where little looking-glasses and pictures and texts had hung; but there were no photographs; nothing left but the nails and one illuminated text, 'When all these things come upon you—then LOOK UP.'

The bedrooms were quite empty; the floor had been recently washed, and had not a foot-mark on it. The blinds had been removed from the windows. The rooms looked utterly forlorn. She came sadly downstairs again.

In a corner of the kitchen was a shelf with drawers let into the wall—a fixture, therefore not removed. On the shelf was a bundle of old clothes of the children, neatly pinned together—rags, no longer fit for wear by them; and in the drawers was a small straw hat, tied up in Richard's blue pocket-handkerchief—that handkerchief at which she had sneered. The little hat had perhaps been forgotten; perhaps it was not wanted, and Richard had left purposely the handkerchief, which would remind him of one of his wife's sarcasms. She unknotted the ends of the kerchief and took it in her hand.

From the ceiling in the kitchen, depending from a crook, hung a fresh bunch of everlastings, pink-and-white flowers of that summer, not yet dried, hung head downwards, that they might dry expanded. Then Josephine's heart swelled up, and she choked. Hastily she drew the inverted cradle from the wall and put it near the table, under the tuft of fading everlastings, and sat down on the cradle, between the rockers, and put her face into her hands and cried. It was as though the spirit of Richard Cable rose before her out of the cold ashes on the hearth, from among the torn fragments of her own likeness—not the spirit of the wounded, angry, unforgiving, despairing man, as she had last seen him, but as of old, gentle, humble, full of divine trust and love.

She cried long; her own little white handkerchief was soaked, and she wept tears of bitter self-reproach into the

great blue dishclout she had so scorned; and when the fountain of her tears dried, then she held the kerchief to her aching heart, and presently again buried her face in it. There was nought ridiculous to her now in the blue handkerchief with its white spots.

CHAPTER XXXII.

BENEATH THE EVERLASTINGS.

The night had closed in, and still Josephine sat on the overturned cradle. The tears had dried up; but she continued to occupy the same place, holding Richard's handkerchief clasped in both her hands on her lap, looking straight before her into vacancy—lost in thought. A soft, yellowish-gray light filled the little window; but within the cottage kitchen all was dark—or, at best, was in deep twilight. Josephine had not moved for an hour. Her face was away from the window, in complete shadow. All at once a flash fell on her. She looked heavily up, with half consciousness, to see her father and the rector before her.

'I knew she would be here,' said the latter.

'I did not suppose her such a fool,' muttered Mr. Cornellis.

'Then you see I knew her best,' said the rector. 'Josephine.' He put out his hand, and she listlessly put her own into it. She liked and trusted Mr. Sellwood, who had known her from infancy.

'My dear child,' he said, 'your hand is cold and wet.'

'I have been crying,' she answered simply.

'You must need your dinner,' said her father. 'We have put it off, and off, awaiting you, and the soles will be burned to chips.'

She said nothing in reply to her father, but her fingers closed on the rector's hand as he was withdrawing it. 'I want to speak to you, Mr. Sellwood—alone,' she said. 'Would you mind remaining here with me a little while?'

'But, Josephine,' said her father, 'dinner is spoiling; consider the soles.'

'Please go home, papa, and eat the soles; I will not detain

you. The matter about which I wish to speak is one I desire to speak about to the rector alone.'

Mr. Cornellis considered for a moment. Josephine was fretting at the departure of her husband. Girls never know their own minds. It was perhaps natural that she should feel for awhile his sudden disappearance. In a day or two this chagrin would pass and the sense of relief prevail. It might relieve Josephine's mind to talk the affair over with Mr. Sellwood; it could do no possible harm. She was a girl who acted on her own impulses and took no advice which did not agree with her own wishes. The rector might, and probably would, advise that she should open communication with Richard Cable and urge him to return. This evening she might agree with him; to-morrow she would come to a better mind.

Mr. Cornellis shrugged his shoulders. 'I will leave the lantern with you,' he said, 'to help and lighten your consultation.'

When he was gone the rector set the lantern on the floor, and said: 'Well, Josephine, you want my advice?'

'O no, Mr. Sellwood; I have made up my mind. I want you to tell me how I can carry out my own intentions.'

'Well done, young woman! This is frankly put. It is not always that your sex is so outspoken. They ask advice, and follow it only if agreeable to their own fancies.'

'I want to tell you everything, rector,' she said. 'I have acted very foolishly—I mean very wrongly. I have worked a vast amount of mischief, and now I have been trying to find out how I may undo it.'

'What have you done? Tell me that first; and secondly, what you are going to do to mend it. Then I will give you my advice.'

'I do not ask your advice.'

'Oh, I beg pardon; I forgot,' said the old parson somewhat testily. 'I give you fair warning I will not lend my hand to any starscraping, scatterbrained scheme. You may not seek my advice—you may not value it; but the experience of a man of over sixty is worth something.'

'Indeed, indeed, dear Mr. Sellwood, I value your opinion, your advice, most highly; but this is a case in which I must decide for myself. I have done one wrong after another, an injustice in ignorance, a wrong wilfully; and it appears to me clear as the day that I, and I alone, can work out my course

for the future so as to amend the mischief. If you approve, I am very glad; but if not, I cannot help it. I must go my own way, or sin against my conscience. I know very well that my father will not approve—he and I see everything differently; and Aunt Judith will be indignant, and call my conduct wicked, because it is not commonplace.'

'Never mind about Aunt Judith. You are too severe.'

'Mr. Sellwood,' said Josephine, 'would you mind sitting on the table whilst I talk to you?'

'I will sit anywhere, my dear, to please you—anywhere but in a bishop's throne, and that—no—not for any one.'

'Then I will remain here on poor little Bessie's cradle, at your feet.'

'But not in a childlike spirit and in the mental attitude of a disciple, you headstrong piece of goods. You have made up your mind—to what pray? How long have you taken forming it? A solid judgment is a first requisite in the making-up of minds, and that—excuse me—you lack.'

'I have been very unhappy. I have cried till I have wet dear Richard's handkerchief through.'

'So at last there is some community established between you. Both use the same pocket-handkerchief.'

'Mr. Sellwood, I will tell you everything; but please not to interrupt me in my story.'

The rector, who loved to hear his own voice, was nettled. 'I am to pass no comments, as I am to tender no advice. Well, I will do my best; but I cannot promise silence.'

'And yet you expect us to sit quiet when you preach, whether we agree with you or not.'

The rector winced. 'Go on,' he said. 'After that I must be silent.'

Then she told him the whole story of Gabriel Gotham and Bessie, as she had heard it from her aunt; and it filled the rector with astonishment. He had not heard anything of it before. 'Bless me!' he exclaimed, 'Mrs. Cable is a wonderful woman to keep her mouth shut! Proud—proud as Beelzebub.'

'A noble pride; not devilish,' said Josephine.

'Yes,' he said; 'I admit the correction—a proud-hearted woman, a grand woman! There are not many like her.'

Then Josephine told him how she had only come to a knowledge of this a few hours ago.

'And already made up your mind upon it!' exclaimed

the parson. He could not refrain from making his comments.

'Mr. Sellwood,' Josephine went on—she withdrew her hand from his and folded her arms over her bosom, but did not let go her hold of the blue handkerchief—'Mr. Sellwood, I have acted very wickedly. I daresay I acted without a wise discretion in marrying Richard. I was not in love with him.'

'Then why in the world did you marry him? That was your sole excuse for committing an act of folly, and you have cast it from you.'

'It was this which drove me to it. Papa was so disagreeable with me about him; he said such things that I was angry, and became defiant. Aunt Judith was stupid—as she always is—and I felt an inclination to fly in her face and thoroughly shock her. Then I got into that awkward predicament on the seawall at midnight, when you and Captain Sellwood came upon me with Richard. After that matters were complicated by Cousin Gotham; I believe he did it purposely. He gave Richard the boat—in my name, and had the boat called by my name, and encouraged talk in the place about me and Richard, which made me very uncomfortable and my father very angry, and I did not see how I could get out of the hobble, into which I had been partly thrust and had partly slipped, in any other way. I was nearly mad with annoyance and wounded vanity and irritated self-will. But that was not all. I saw that Richard was so natural, open, good, and true, and I felt so utterly at a loss where to look for a guide. My father——'

'Never mind about your father.'

'I could not follow his advice, and I did not feel that I was secure in my own opinion of right and wrong. I suppose all women look for someone to whom to cling.'

'My advice you never thought of asking for,' said the rector in a tone fraught with mortified pride. 'You seek me only to tell you how you may be enabled to follow your own whims without inconvenience.'

'Do not be cross with me, Mr. Sellwood,' pleaded Josephine. 'I cannot explain to you exactly how I was situated at home. Somehow papa and I never had much in common and we did not share confidences. I was driven to battle out my own way, sometimes going wrong, and sometimes right.'

'Many times wrong, and sometimes right,' suggested the rector.

'Possibly so.' She paused, considered, and then said: 'No; I do not think it. When I have gone wrong I have been influenced from without. As for marrying Richard—that was not wrong, except in Aunt Judith's table of commandments, in which all that is not usual is wrong. No'—she spoke with the earnestness of sincerity—'I really believe that the prevailing thought in me was that in Richard I should find an ideal man of truth and honour, and that is why I took him.'

'Mercy on me!' exclaimed the rector. 'Because a man can drive a donkey-cart that does not qualify him to drive a locomotive. Richard was all very well in his own sphere, but you transferred him to one he knew nothing about, in which he could not possibly assist you.'

'I see that clearly enough now,' said Josephine humbly. 'I did not see it till too late; and then when I became aware of it I got impatient with him; I lost my temper because he could not accommodate himself immediately to his new position. I exacted of him the impossible.'

'To be sure you did.'

'I made no allowances for him. I was irritated and spoke rudely, insultingly to him. I even ridiculed this dear old blue handkerchief, which'—the tears began to trickle down her cheeks again—'which is now wet with my contrite tears.'

The kind old rector took her hand and patted it between his own. 'My dear,' he said, 'all will come right in the end now; you have begun at the right end—with repentance.'

'But he is gone away—gone with all his children and his mother, without even saying a good-bye. I have driven him out of his home. That is not all. You know his story now; you see that the Hall and the manor ought in common fairness to be his. What an injustice—what a wicked injustice I have done him!'

'I am glad you acknowledge your faults, Josephine; that is the first step towards making all well again.'

'This is nothing like all I have done, rector. I have spoiled the goodness that was in Richard. I have made him morose, bitter, and mistrustful. Even that is not all. It was through my fault that the poor little child was hurt. I had so angered him that when he went to the "Anchor" he drank too much and then——'

'Yes, I know the rest.' Mr. Sellwood said no more; for

once he was silent. He was touched by the self-accusation of the girl, and he did not know, for once also, what to advise.

'Richard was so gentle, so full of thought for others, and pity for those who suffered in any way, so helpful to all who were weak; and now he is quite changed. He is sullen at one moment, fierce at the next. He no longer loves me—he told me so; and I know, I do know, that only a little while ago he loved me with his whole honest, noble heart. He has torn up my picture and thrown it among the ashes.'

'He cannot tear you out of his memory.'

'But he can remember me only as the murderess of his happiness, as the one person who maimed his child. He can remember me only as an offender who is past being forgiven.'

'I do not think it,' said the rector. 'Love is not killed so quickly. It may sink into the ground and disappear, like a spring in drought; but it will break up again, and flow as before.'

'No, Mr. Sellwood; he will never love me again till I am quite changed from what I have been. I have been sitting here for a long time—how long I do not know—considering what is to be done. Things must not remain as they are.'

'Exactly; and if you ask my advice——'

'I do not; I have made up my mind.'

'I beg your pardon; I forgot.' He was a little huffed, and took away his hand from Josephine.

'Do not let me go,' she pleaded. 'I do not want to offend you; I have no one else to whom I can open my heart.'

He took her hand again and pressed it, in assurance of his regard.

'Well, Mr. Sellwood, I have been turning the whole miserable muddle out, and arranging my thoughts and putting them in order, just as Richard would tidy everything into its proper place. There are a lot of things mixed together, and these I have sorted into their several lockers. First come Cousin Gotham's money and estate. I have no right to them. They belong in all fairness to Richard; that I see clearly; so I will have nothing more to do with them.'

The rector started.

'Tell me,' she asked—'tell me, frankly, what you think?'

'In law——'

'That is like my Aunt Judith. Because Cousin Gotham was five hours short of his legal time in Scotland, therefore what is wrong is right.'

'It is you now, Josephine, who interrupt. By law, you have a perfect, unassailable right to everything left by Mr. Gotham. Whether you are justified in accepting and keeping his bequest, under the circumstances, morally and in honour, is another matter.'

'There! there!' she exclaimed almost exultantly. 'You see I riddled out that conundrum right. The property belongs to Richard. He shall have it. I will not touch a penny of it more.'

'But what of your father?'

'My father must manage for himself. I see my course plain before me. I go straight my own way, and put wax in my ears, so as not to hear any voice from outside, however sweetly singing.'

'Go on, then. What next?'

'In the next place, I acknowledge that I did wrong in requiring Richard to shape himself to fit a position for which he was unsuited.'

'Right again,' said the rector.

'At his age it is not possible for him to adapt himself, in every external, to what is required of him. In heart and mind, rector—oh, he is the truest gentleman! a Bayard, *sans peur et sans reproche*.'

Mr. Sellwood smiled at her enthusiasm.

'It would have been different, had he been quite a young man; but he is past the age when all the mental bones are flexible,' said Josephine.

'I do not know that—with patience and in time——'

'No, rector; he must not again be subjected to the restraint and torture. He must be allowed to go his own simple way, unhampered by artificial checks and unteased by conventional regulations.'

'Then what do you propose?'

'If we are to be reconciled, if he is ever to be happy with me, the disparity between us must disappear.'

'But how? You have just said he is too old to learn our social habits.'

'Precisely; but I can go down to his level.'

'My dear!—What do you mean?'

'Do you not see that the only chance of our living happily together is for us to be on an equal footing? He has tried my level, and cannot sustain himself on it. I must take his.'

'That is not practicable.'

'Pardon me—it is. Do you not see that one step in this course I have mapped out leads to another? I have said that I will not have his money. Therefore, I have nothing of my own. What I had has been dissipated. I have not a penny. What must I do, then? I must earn my livelihood.'

'Good gracious, Josephine!' The rector sprang from the table on which he had been seated.

'I must learn to think and feel and see things as Richard does, through eyes on the same plane as his—so only shall we be able to understand each other. That is not all. He is very angry with me now, and nothing else that I can do will convince him of my repentance and of my desire for reconciliation.'

'Earn your living! Goodness gracious me!'

'All fits together perfectly, rector. I shall earn his esteem at the same time that I am acquiring the modes of thought and habits of a lower grade in life.'

'Upon my word!' exclaimed Mr. Sellwood, 'you are a person who always rushes into extremes.' He was astonished beyond measure.

'Extreme measures alone suit the occasion,' answered Josephine. 'As I utterly renounce my claim on the property, I can do no other than earn my bread, and by so doing I gain my chief end.'

'But how will you earn your bread?'

'I will go into service. His first wife was a maid in your house, and he was happy with her.'

'You must not do this—it will be degradation.'

'I must do it. It will be no degradation, morally, for I have a right end in view.'

The rector was greatly shaken. 'I would never have advised this; I would never have thought of this.'

'I knew that; therefore I did not ask your advice.'

Mr. Sellwood remained silent. He could not grasp her bold proposal all at once. Josephine waited. She had become calm as she spoke of her resolution. She waited for him to say something. Presently, he said in a choking voice: 'I retract what I let fall just now. There will be, there can be no degradation. On the contrary, there will be a rise of your better self. My dear, this is very wonderful to me. Your female instinct is a better guide than my masculine sense. I should never have thought of this. Even now, I cannot say whether it commends itself to my reason; to my heart, it

does at once, at once!' He was much moved. 'Josephine, in such a daring venture, guidance and help are needed.' Then he paused again. Presently he went on: 'Josephine, perhaps you have read that, in old times, pearls were found in the Severn, and British pearls were much esteemed. Do you know how they were found? Horses and cattle were driven across the fords in the Severn, and they trampled on, bruised, and broke the mussel shells that lay there; then the crushed mussels in their pain exuded the matter that formed the pearls. Now that bridges have been built to span the Severn, no more pearls are found in it; for, though there are mussels still in the shallow water, they remain only mussels; they produce no longer pearls, because no longer bruised and broken. My dear Josephine, I think—I believe, that the pearl of a nobler and a truer life is beginning to grow in you, because the feet are passing over you and treading you down.'

'Rector,' said Josephine after a long silence, 'what are you looking at above me—the everlastings?'

He paused, he did not answer at once, he recovered himself slowly, and said softly: 'The Everlasting! Yes.'

CHAPTER XXXIII.

PENTARGON.

The morning broke after a stormy night, broke wild and haggard. On the horizon a white shimmer under heavy clouds that would not rise, from which fell lashes of dark rain over the light—a shimmer cold and ghastly as that of the half-closed eye of a dead man. The sea raced inland, in rolling piled-up billows, shaking itself, roaring, spluttering, raging, bent on tearing itself to shreds on the cutlass-like reefs, and beating itself to liquid dust on the cuirass-like cliffs that defended the north Cornish coast. The wind had been blowing a hurricane all night, shifting a few points from south to north, but always with a main drive from the west, like the dogged determination of a madman making feints to throw his victim off his guard, but never swerving from his murderous purpose. The sea, heaped together, jostling billows, was caught and compressed between the horns of Padstow

Point and Hartland. In that vast half-moon, walled up to the sky with perpendicular iron-bound precipices, the white horses bounded and tumbled over each other, and rolled and were beaten down in the conflict. They plunged at the barriers and leaped high into the air, snorting foam, shaking their manes, and fell back broken, torn, to be trampled into the deeps by other billows, likewise rushing on their destruction. A vessel that enters within the bow of that vast arc, when the wind is on shore, is infallibly lost, and the 'Bessie' on the morning in question had been driven within the fateful limits.

As already mentioned, Mrs. Cable's mother was a Cornish-woman. Bessie Cable had never visited her mother's native county; but an occasional letter, perhaps once a year, had kept up a link between her and an old mining uncle, Zackie Pendarves, at St. Kerian. The man was now dead, and he had left his small savings and cottage to his only known relative, his niece Bessie, whom he had never seen. The bequest came opportunely; for when Richard told his mother of his intention to leave Hanford, she was able to propose that they should migrate to Cornwall and take up their residence in Uncle Zackie's house. What the size of that house was, how much land went with it, in what condition of repair the house was, that was all unknown. Nevertheless, it was a freehold, their own; and the cottage at Hanford was held on a half-yearly tenancy. Richard at once agreed to his mother's proposal. At St. Kerian they would begin a new life, leaving behind them all disturbing recollections.

So Richard manned the yacht, and without allowing his purpose to transpire, shipped his family and goods away, sailed down Channel, doubled the Land's End, and was at once caught in a sudden storm. He had never been in these seas before; he knew nothing of the coast save what he could gather from his chart; but he saw that his only chance was to keep out to sea; and all night he struggled to make head against the gale. When the day broke, he saw that his efforts had been fruitless—the yacht had been driven within the threatening horns, terrible as Scylla and Charybdis. Neither Richard nor one of the crew had closed an eye all night; every man's energies had been at full strain. Cable had not been down into the cabin. Whether his mother slept or watched, he knew not; but she was probably aware of the danger. His dear little ones slumbered, confident of their

safety whilst the father was in command on deck. They were not afraid of the water; the tossing of the sea did not trouble them. They were accustomed to it, as tiny water-birds. Often, one or other had been taken to the lightship, and had been inured to the roll and pitch of a vessel, and they minded it no more than the baby minded the sway of the cradle. Why should they fear, any more than the baby that was rocked to sleep by grannie's foot? This was their father's great cradle, and the motion soothed their little brains.

All night long, hope had been strong in Cable's breast; he trusted that he had been able to tack against the wind and gain deep sea; but when morning dawned, he saw that their fate was sealed. From the sea, the coast, towards which wind and wave remorselessly impelled the boat, appeared as one sheer wall of rock, nowhere scooped out into harbours, nowhere retreating sufficiently to allow of beach at the feet of the mighty crags. Here and there on the top of the cliffs he could distinguish towers, the belfries of storm-beaten churches, cutting the dawning eastern light. And here and there a sea-mark, a turret, that indicated, perhaps, the entrance to some tortuous channel cleft in the precipices, up which a boat might wriggle in calm weather, but utterly impracticable in a storm.

The base of the cliffs was everywhere hidden in foam, and the spray was caught and whirled about and churned up with the wind, so that nowhere could be distinguished a line of demarcation between sea and land. Water and air were shaken together into a belt of salt mist, impenetrable to the eye. Thus the head of the coast-wall stood up against the dawning light like a mountain ridge whose roots lie buried in curdy morning mists. If he could have distinguished anywhere a sandy cove, he would have run the 'Bessie' towards it; but, apparently, there was nothing before her but to be dashed against upright cliffs and go to pieces in deep water.

As Richard stood considering the prospect, and thinking whether it were advisable to run for a circular tower which seemed to indicate the entrance to a port, the mate and the rest of the crew came to him and insisted on taking to the boat. There was no chance for the vessel, none possible; there was one for a small boat, which could feel the shore for a landing-place. If there were a cleft where the tower stood—then a row-boat might be run in; it was more under control than a ship. They wanted Cable to bring up his

mother and children and take them along with them. The only prospect of life lay in deserting the 'Bessie.'

Richard Cable heard them out with a frown and set teeth. Then he bade them take the boat and begone. He and his would abide in the yacht and drown together in her. 'You drown your way—and I and mine will go down together our way,' he answered.

Jonas Flinders was one of the crew, and he urged Richard not to commit such a folly, that where there was a chance, he was bound to grasp it; but Richard was not to be moved. He took the wheel and signed the men away.

He watched the crew unswing the boat, get in, and leave the 'Bessie.' He watched them rowing, danced about on the waves, lashed by the spray, and then lost them in the drift. What became of them he could not tell. It was well that they were gone. If he must die with his darlings, let them die all together, without others by.

That boat never reached the land with its load. It came ashore in chips, and the men in scraps of flesh and bone, literally sliced to pieces on the razor-like blades of slate that ran out from the cliffs into the water.

Richard noticed that a flagstaff stood on a rock near the tower, and he suspected that if there were a channel, it lay between these; but the entrance was masked by an insulated rock standing out of the water like a gigantic meal-sack. He took a piece of rope and lashed the tiller fast, so that the bows were turned directly towards the supposed entrance to a port. Then he went to the ladder leading to the cabin and descended slowly. He was in his dreadnaught, dripping with sea-water, his pilot-hat drawn over his brows, and the lappets covered his ears. When he came into the cabin, it was still dark there; only now and then, through a side-light, came a cold white gleam, and then it was blurred over by gray water. The pendent lamp, however, was still burning; but the oil was almost exhausted, and the wick was much charred, so that the light it gave was not bright. It had burned all night. Mrs. Cable had not slept all night; she knew the peril, and she kept watch. Now, all the children but tiny Bessie were awake, and their grandmother was dressing and washing them. Owing to the pitch of the vessel, the operation was conducted with difficulty. Richard Cable stood at the cabin entrance, holding the posts, and looking on. His mother was then combing out and smoothing on either side

of her ears Mary's golden hair. Little Susie stood with her hands and face wet, asking to have them wiped. Did Mrs. Cable know that they were all about to die? She thought it very likely, but she washed and dressed the children as carefully as if they were going to a school-feast. If they must go in an hour before the throne of God, they should go with their hair tidy, with white stockings and clean bibs, and Mary with the coral necklace round her throat that had belonged to her mother.

Richard looked steadily at the group, and said: 'Mother, when we strike, come on deck with all of them, and give me Bessie into my arms. You shall not drown down here, like mice in a cage.' Then with a deep frown he added: 'This also comes of her.'

'Richard,' said Mrs. Cable gravely, as she bound Mary's hair behind her head, 'it is not so. Forgive her now.'

'It cannot be;' in a louder tone—'I will not.'

'What! Richard? Not when we are about to appear before the great God?'

He shook his head. 'But for her, this would not have come upon us. Our death will lie at her door; all the miseries I have suffered through her are not enough. She must kill me and mine.'

'O Richard, do not be unforgiving!'

'I thought to wipe out the curse that comes with her name when I changed the title of the vessel; but the evil clings to us and drags us down.'

'Richard, I once had a bitter wrong done me, worse than any that has touched you; but I forgave.'

'Mother, if this brought me alone to destruction, I could freely pardon; but when it carries along with me you and all—all that I love—I cannot; I will not. If I go to the judgment seat above I will take all the seven with me and denounce her; and if there be justice in heaven, she shall suffer.' He gripped the rail as he turned and reascended the ladder, muttering as he went: 'I cannot—I will not.'

On deck again, he resumed his place at the tiller, and unlashed it. The 'Bessie' was running near the meal-sack rock, at which the waves raced as in frolic, or savagely bent on throwing it over, but instead of effecting this, were themselves whirled as waterspouts high into the air. The rocks in front seemed to tower two or three hundred feet out of the sea. Above them, the sky was brightening and the clouds

parting. All at once, Richard saw a fissure in the face of the cliff, a mere rift, impossible for him to strike and pass through. As easily might a man thread a needle on horseback when hunting and the hounds are in full cry. On the left of the ness crowned by the flagstaff, the wall of rock sheered away inland and the cliffs seemed to be scooped out. Cable, with a tremendous effort, wrenched the helm hard down, and brought the bowsprit with a swing round, so that the 'Bessie,' instead of running into the cleft, turned, cleared the flagstaff rock, and went on the ridge of a roller into a caldron or cove north of it. He drew his hand over his eyes and wiped the spray out of them, and saw that he had dived into a semi-circular bay, walled up to heaven on every side but that by which he had entered, and in which the mad waves were thundering tumultuously. One side of the cove ended seaward in a mighty black headland, that overhung, without a ledge on it where seagull could nest or samphire take root. In the lap of the bay, where the rocks were not quite so high, a waterfall leaped down, and was lost below in the spondrift that filled the air. One moment more and all would be over. He left the wheel and went to the cabin door, and called : 'Come on deck.'

Then up came the children, Mary leading the way, clinging to the rail with one hand, and with the other helping little Martha to mount the brass-laid steps. Last of all appeared Mrs. Cable, carrying the baby. As each little head appeared, Richard, who knelt on one knee by the cabin hatchway, helped the child up, and put his arms round it, and gave it a long embrace and kiss—the last, he thought, in this world. He said nothing ; he could not speak. Bitter in his heart, bitter as the seabrine, tossed the anger against Josephine, who had brought this about.

Without a word, he took the babe from his mother, and then Mrs. Cable gave a hand to each of the youngest. So they stood, a little group on deck, looking at the remorseless, cruel shore, at the sweep of iron cliffs that engirdled them, about to hug them to death. Though so near, they could not see their feet, hidden in foam and spray. Around them shrieked and laughed the seamews. The wind whistled in the cordage. The water roared and hissed around.

Then Mrs. Cable stooped to the children's ears and said something that Richard could not hear ; but at once, above the boom of the sea and the piping of the wind, he heard the little voices raised in song :

Shall we meet beyond the river,
Where the surges cease to roll,
Where in all the bright For-ever,
Sorrow ne'er shall vex the soul?

It was a song the children had learned at their Sunday school, a song of which their father was very fond, and which he had often made them warble to him. The poor, feeble, quavering voices were now out of tune and faint, with the wonder and fear that fell on them at the sight of what was before; but they knew that their song would please their father, so they girded up their faltering courage and sang as loud and strong as they could:

Shall we meet in that blessed harbour,
When our stormy voyage is o'er?
Shall we meet and cast the anchor
By the far celestial shore?

And—see! above the head of the waterfall, towards which they were driving, through the rift it had sawn in the rocky wall, flashed the rising sun—it turned the head of the stream, as it took its final leap, into liquid gold, and the river seemed to pour from the very heart of the sun, bringing fire and life and hope down into the wild, gloomy abyss below.

Shall we meet with many loved ones
Who were torn from our embrace?

sang the little voices, and stopped—for, from out of the haze that hung between the sea and cliffs, leaped a fiery streak, like a flash of lightning, and something flaring, roaring, screaming, rushed over their heads; and a moment after, with a sharp crack like the report of a pistol, a rope fell athwart the deck. Those on shore had seen the wreck and had discharged a rocket over her. Richard knew at once that all was not lost. He flew to the rope and made it fast.

In another moment the vessel struck, not on a reef, but on a shingly beach, and at the same moment a great sea struck her on stern and went up in spiral whirl, like a shaving before a plane, and washed the deck. Richard seized his little ones and drew them to him. The wave passed, and none was lost. Then he gave the baby to his mother, and took up Mary in his arms; she clung round his neck, lacing her hands behind, fastening herself to him as a ferret holds to his prey. She was a shrewd child, and she knew what her father was about to do. He needed not to tell her. She

put her lips to his cold wet cheek. Then he grasped the rocket rope, and went over the side with her into the boiling foam.

Whilst he was away, Mrs. Cable drew the children half down the cabin ladder, where they might be safe from the seas which struck the vessel and swept the deck. Every sea drove the 'Bessie' deeper into the shingle and farther up the shore; she was steadied, but exposed to the full force of the waves.

Presently, from out of the leaping water, with the froth dripping from him, came Cable again, clinging to the rope, followed by two men from the shore; and the rest of the children and Mrs. Cable were conveyed in safety to land. Most difficulty was found with the babe, as little Bessie could not be relied on to cling. She must be held in one arm, and the rope grasped with the other, Richard would let no one take her but himself, and he succeeded in bringing her through. He was now much exhausted, numbed with cold, and his limbs shook. He would not yield up the child. The danger was yet not over.

The cove into which the yacht had been run was that of Pentargon. It has a small rubbly strand, which can only be reached from the top of the cliffs by an arduous path, which, as it nears the base, passes over shale that lies upon slate-shelves steeply inclined downwards, over which water dribbles. By this perilous way alone could the little party ascend; by this, with great difficulty, had the coastguard brought the rocket apparatus, when from the look-out they saw the little vessel driven into the cove.

The sturdy coastguardmen gave their hands to the children, to help them to ascend the steep slope over the treacherous shelf, where a fall might precipitate them over a ledge upon the shingle-beach or into the water.

'I will come last, with the baby,' said Cable. So the procession formed. Each must mount singly, staying up a child. There was nothing to cling to; every step must be taken with precaution in the loose and sliding shale.

Richard held the smallest child well wrapped under his dreadnaught. She was awake, frightened, cold and fretful, and her sobs and impatience at being covered up harassed Richard, already spent with his watchful night and struggles through the waves with the children. He raised the flap of his coat, put down his head, and spoke soothingly to the infant. His voice usually had great effect in lulling her cries

when in pain; but it was not so now. Little Bessie did not know what was going on, was drenched with sea-water, and greatly terrified. She could not understand her father, or would not be satisfied.

'It is dada who has you in his arms, Bessie,' he said, with his mouth under his dreadnaught. 'Baby will soon be snug in a warm bed, and have hot milk to drink.'

But she strove fretfully in his arms to beat a way by which she might peer out of the wraps, and broke out into shrill screams of pain and anger.

Richard stood still on the shelf, to readjust her in his arms; perhaps, as he held her, her little back suffered, so he altered her position under his oilskin coat. Her cries went through his heart and unnerved him, already shaken and exhausted; cold though he was, he felt hot for a moment with distress and perturbation of spirit.

'Bessie, darling! do be still. Trust your dada a few minutes more, and all will be well!'

But hardly had the words escaped him, when the rubble under his feet slid away on the shelfy strata of slate. He fell heavily on his side. He had just presence of mind to fold both his arms round the baby, when he rolled over, and went down the slope and steps of rock. If he were hurt, he felt no pain; his whole attention was engrossed in the child he bore, his whole effort to ward it from blows with his elbows and hands.

In another moment one of the coastguardmen came down to him.

'Bessie is unhurt!' exclaimed Richard, lying among the stones.

'Any harm done?' asked the man. 'Give us a hand. Stand up, mate.'

Cable waited a moment, and moved his elbows, and then said: 'Take her. I cannot rise.'

He had dislocated his thigh.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE 'MAGPIE.'

There stood a humble inn—a tavern, rather—called the 'Magpie,' on the downs; its door opened on no high road; but it stood where lanes or side parish roads converged. In

the olden days, it had been a resort of smugglers who had run their goods into Pentargon Cove. The taverner had then always maintained half-a-dozen donkeys, and these were employed in transporting the smuggled goods up the cliffs by the precarious path which alone gave access to the cove, and enabled goods brought there to be carried away. The smugglers knew well enough how to surmount the most difficult portion of the ascent: they stretched a rope along it from a crowbar driven into the turf above. As for the donkeys, they were unshod and sure-footed, they would run almost where a squirrel went.

But the smuggling times were past, so were the days when a lively trade in wrecks was carried on; and the 'Magpie' would have perished of inanition, had not the landlord begun to enclose the downs and annex a farm to his alehouse. The place was so exposed, so wynd-swept, that only rye would grow there; but he kept plenty of sheep and several pigs, and reared, though he could not fatten, cattle.

As none of the roads that met at the 'Magpie' were market-roads, the host could only count on stray passengers, fagged with laborious scrambles up the stony and steep coast-road, to drop in for refreshment. His most regular customers were the coastguard, who, in their nocturnal tramps along the cliffs, passed his door twice every night, and never passed without a halt and a drop of comfort.

Partly because the coastguard wished to do Jacob Corye a good turn, and partly because the 'Magpie' was the nearest inn, they conveyed the Cable family beneath its sheltering roof. Richard was put to bed, a surgeon sent for; and Mrs. Cable undressed the children, borrowed dry clothes of the landlady for them, and set to work to wash the salt out of their garments and hang them up to dry.

Scarcely had the Cables been housed, before a swarm of men came down the cliff to the beach, from which the tide was retreating, invaded the 'Bessie,' and began to ransack and strip her, as the ants will attack and strip a dead bird cast near their mound. Sails, shrouds, anchor, binnacle, the fittings of the cabin, the contents of the galley, the mattresses of the berths, the benches, stools, the chests, everything they could remove was carried away. They heeded neither cold nor wet; they disregarded the peril to their lives from the waves that still swept the wreck, so eager, so ravenous were they for spoil.

The days of the wreckers are long over—that is to say, the days when wrecking was called wrecking; it is now called salving, from the Latin word *salvare*, to save; but this does not imply that those who have been wrecked get much more than if they had fallen into the hands of wreckers. Those whose fathers went wrecking, now go salving; and very consoling it is to us to know that we have made such an advance in civilisation. As a matter of fact, the thing is pretty much the same. All salvage is supposed to be given up to an official Receiver of Wreck—on the coast where the 'Bessie' was cast, this was the head coastguard. But it is by no means certain that all that is salved is thus delivered over. When the Receiver has got what the salvors have chosen to deliver up, then the Board of Trade investigates, and decides between the respective claims of the owner and the salvor, retaining, however, a share for the Crown. Usually the wreckage is sold by auction first; and it is the proceeds which are divided, the Crown taking a third, and the salvors a third; and a third is left to the owner. To the last-named the salving looks very like wrecking; to Richard Cable, very much so on this occasion; for the things were sold when he was unable to attend, and the amount raised to be divided by three was not much, and his receipt infinitesimal compared with the value he set on his property. Moreover, things he valued highly sold for pence and farthings. Richard was irritated, and not at all in a frame of mind to be comforted by the thought that everything he treasured had gone under the category of salvage, and was therefore clean away from him for ever.

'It is her doing—it all comes of her!' he muttered, and tossed in fever and rage on his bed. He was unreasonable in his anger. The thought of Josephine as one who brought evil on him and pursued him remorselessly, had taken hold of his fancy, and he attributed every misfortune to her; not altogether without a cause, for had she not made Hanford unendurable to him, he would not have left it; had he not left it, he would not have been wrecked; had he not been wrecked, he would not have been crippled; and had he not been crippled, he would have returned to his ship the moment he saw his children safe, and then no wreckers or salvors could have meddled with its contents.

His very ship was no longer his own; it had passed into the hands of the salvors. Fortunately, all his money was

safe; before leaving, he had secured it about him. But the amount was small, after he had paid his rent and all the little bills at Hanford.

Presently, Mrs. Cable came up and took his hand. It was hot, and his cheeks were flushed. 'The surgeon is a long time coming,' she said. 'O Richard, this accident to you is worst of all.'

'That is as it should be,' he answered. 'I threw little Bessie down and injured her; now she has cast me down and lamed me. If in like manner as She at Hanford Hall'—he would not name Josephine—'has brought misery and ruin on me and mine, misery and ruin might befall her, I were well content.'

'Richard,' said Mrs. Cable sorrowfully, 'I do not recognise you, with these bitter feelings in your heart.'

'I do not recognise myself. Do you know how, if a little gall falls into a pot, it spoils the whole mess? She has spilt wormwood into my life; and the world, everything I taste and smell and see and hear and feel, is bitterness to me.'

The doctor arrived; and with the help of the innkeeper, Richard's leg was got in place again; but the surgeon shook his head, and said that there was more injury than mere displacement done—that the recovery would be slow; the leg must be given perfect rest; and that, unfortunately, it was likely Richard would always have a stiff joint.

'That also,' muttered Cable, clenching his hands in the bed—'that I shall owe to her, and bear ever about, as a lasting record against her, a warning against my ever forgiving her.'

He was restless whilst confined to his bed, and his restlessness interfered with his convalescence. He was impatient to get away, to be at his future home. The pain he suffered made him irritable; but disappointment chafed him more than physical pain. What wrong had he done that he should be thus pursued with misfortune? He had done his utmost for his children; he had discharged his duties as a lightship man, as a son, as a husband, conscientiously; and yet—Providence laid on his back lash after lash, as if he were one who needed chastisement to be brought out of evil courses into the right way. He murmured at the ways of Providence; he accused it of injustice, of cruelty, of blindness. He was wroth with the crew for deserting the 'Bessie.' If they were all drowned, it served them right. Had they remained, on

could have continued in command of the vessel, and delivered it from becoming a prey to the salvors. He was angry with those who had despoiled his ship, though he knew that they had acted with legal right. He was incensed with his hostess, who had come up to his sickroom and demanded whether he were prepared to pay for all the food and care and housing he and his family received.

'We 're poor folk,' said the woman, 'and can't afford to keep eight people for nothing. The children eat a lot o' bread and butter, and drink a gallon of milk. My man is a hard-working chap; but he don't calculate to maintain a family as ain't his own.'

Richard had promised to pay; but the demand of the woman, though reasonable, appeared selfish and hard to him.

'You know,' said she, 'I've heard that folks be going about with a brief to get together a few shillings, maybe a couple o' sovereigns or even more, for you; and when you've got the money, you can pay me out of that.'

Then Richard was very hot with indignation. 'Tell those busybodies who have begun the collection, to return every penny. Not one coin of it will we touch. I am not a beggar. I will take nothing from any one but what I have earned with my hands.'

He knew that his scanty fund would soon be exhausted; but he would not stoop to receive a gift. He was a proud man—he had inherited pride from his mother.

Then he thought of Josephine, always with a simmering rage in his heart. He counted over all the insults she had heaped on him. He recalled her look, the flash of her eye, the distended nostril, the curled lip, the contemptuous shrug of the beautiful shoulders, the intonation of her flexible voice, He could not yet shake off the fascination, the admiration she produced in him; but he thought of her without love. What was she now doing? How had she borne the news of his departure? He knew but too surely. She had laughed, and clapped her hands, and tossed her beautiful head, and said: 'I am well rid of him.' Now she was free, and enjoying herself, going about to all the tennis-parties and picnics and dinners in the neighbourhood, courted, making herself agreeable, saying sharp and witty things, singing and playing, forgetting him utterly, and only now and then, when forced to recall him, recollecting him with a sneer. As he thus

thought, he ground his teeth and tore at the sheet till he had ripped it into rags; and he bit at the rags and tore them smaller and threw them about him, in impotent fury. Verily, he hated Josephine with deadly hate.

Jacob Corye, his host, was a good-natured man, and he came up with his pipe occasionally, and with a jug of ale in one hand, and sat and talked with him; but his talk did not much interest Cable—it was all about bullocks.

'You see, cap'n, this is how we're beat. We can raise just about any amount of young stock here; but we can't fat 'em. There's no rich pasture to make 'em fat; or it may be the salt that is over all the land, carried by the wind and air for a score o' miles inland, takes the goodness and the fatting properties out o' the grass. I can't say; I'm no scholar. But we can raise 'em; we can raise 'em in any numbers. We can raise and rear 'em; but we can't sell 'em to good advantage, all because we can't fat 'em. If, now, we could fat 'em as well as raise and rear 'em, then it's pounds on pounds we could make; but we can't do it. I've turned it over and over in my mind, and I don't see how it can be altered. You may take my word for it, cap'n, rearing is one thing, raising is another, and fatting is a third. It is just as with milk—there's milking, and creaming, and buttering. Now, we can rear and raise, but we can't fatten; which is all the same as if in a dairy they milked and made cream, but nohow could turn the cream into butter. Consider the loss that would be, if they couldn't make butter out of the cream! Or, put it another way, with wool—there's the shearing, and then the weaving, and then the tailoring, before the coat of a sheep comes on my back. There's a profit goes in the shearing, another in the weaving, and again in the tailoring. Just reckon it up in your mind what a fortunate thing it would be for me if I could shear the wool off my sheep and clap it straight on to your carcase without any intervention of weaver and tailor. It would not be keeping of the "Magpie" I'd be then, and getting a few coppers out of the coastguard of a night, when they're prowling about looking for each other. It do rile me uncommon, thinking how I'm beat about the fatting.'

'I'm not surprised at your house bearing the sign of the "Magpie,"' said Richard impatiently.

'Ain't you?' answered Jacob. 'Well, now, that's a curious coincidence; nor am I. I found it called the "Magpie"

when I was born into it. But—as I was saying about the young cattle.'

'Oh—the cattle.' Richard turned his head irritably from side to side on the pillow. 'I thought you'd fatted 'em off and done with them.'

'On the contrary,' said Jacob eagerly, 'that's just what I can't do. There come the rascally regraders about, and pick up our calves or young stock; and they take 'em to Camelford or Launceston or Bideford, poor and thin, naught but skin and bone, because we can't fatten. If we could fatten as we can rear and raise, we'd get better prices; but we can't. It's like your seven little maids—just as if you could rear 'em and educate 'em, and couldn't marry 'em, because you'd no money to lay on 'em thick as slabs o' yellow fat. There'd be a cruel case, to have the bringing up of all them maidens and not to be able to marry 'em. I say it's all the same with our young stock. The regraders make a profit at the market; and then others take the cattle, and when they've fatted 'em, they sells 'em to the butchers; and they kill 'em, and there's a profit again. There's two profits goes out of my pocket, and I'm beat if I know how to compass it to secure 'em to myself.'

'I want to go to sleep,' growled Richard, driven desperate by the incessant chatter of the host about raising and rearing and fattening.

'Put it to yourself,' continued the landlord placidly. 'It would be a vexing thing for a father like you to have raised seven little maids—and I will say they're as promising young stock of the human kind as I've seen many a day—and been to pains and expense rearing and educating of 'em; but you never get no farther—never can fatten 'em. You toil and you contrive and pinch yourself every way for 'em; but they remain like Pharaoh's lean kine. You can't do nothing with 'em; no buyer will take 'em off your hands; all your labour and care is so much waste, because you can't fatten. That would be an aggravating sight for a father in his old age to have all these seven as bony, lean old maids browsing about him, because he was unable to dispose of 'em in the marriage market! You can understand that; then you can understand the feelings of a farmer here with his calves. There is nothing like bringing a situation home to a man personally by personal application,' said Jacob sententiously.—'My pipe is out.'

'I'm not surprised,' sneered Richard.—'Hark! what is that? Who is downstairs? I hear a voice I know!'

An exclamation in the doorway from Mrs. Cable: 'Oh, Mr. Sellwood! You here!'

'Come all the way from Hanford on purpose,' was the answer. 'We heard there of the wreck. It was in the papers; and I came to gather information about those who were lost—poor fellows!—for their relations. I thought it would ease their minds. But most of all, I've come to see Richard—I have a message for him.'

'From whom, rector?'

'From his wife—from poor Josephine.'

Poor Josephine? Richard laughed scornfully in his bed.

A brief paragraph in the papers was all that informed Hanford people of the loss of the 'Bessie.' When a ship is wrecked and sailors' or passengers' lives are lost, depositions are taken as to the facts, and the names are entered in an official record; but very little information gets about. When a man-of-war or a passenger vessel sinks, then full lists of those who go down in her are published. When a railway accident occurs, then we know who were killed, who had bones broken, who were bruised, and who had only their hats battered and their shirts crumpled. But when a sailing-vessel, a trader, a collier, a fishing-smack is lost, the matter is dismissed in a line of the daily paper; there is no sensational writing done about it; no details of the tragedy are given. The loss is too insignificant, too much in the common run of events, to demand much attention. When, in the post-office, a letter goes astray, especially if that letter contains half-a-dozen postage stamps, a great stir is made; the General Post-office sends down an official to investigate the matter, to track the course of these six Queen's-heads, and to bring to justice the postman through whose dishonesty they have been made away with. But when a ship, not an envelope, and six living human heads are lost—not six little paper portraits worth a penny each—then a perfunctory inquiry suffices; no one concerns himself to see whether blame attaches to any one; scarcely is the trouble taken to count the lost heads and ascertain whether it were half a dozen, or twelve, or a baker's dozen. So, when the scanty tidings of the loss of the 'Bessie' reached Hanford, no one knew the particulars.

In such cases, on the seacoast, the parson is the one who collects the requisite information. He writes to the parson of the parish where the wreck took place, and the latter is almost sure to supply the desired particulars. But if the parson be like Baal, either talking or hunting or on a journey, or peradventure sleeping, then there is neither voice nor any that answereth, and the trembling, anxious wives and mothers must remain in suspense.

The importance of the tidings of the loss of the 'Bessie' did not strike either Josephine or her father at first, for neither was aware of the change of name; but the rector soon knew, and came to the Hall to break the news to Josephine. He at once volunteered to run down by express to Bideford and take the North Cornwall coach on, and learn all that was needed to be known, and telegraph what he heard to Hanford. Josephine wanted to accompany him, but he dissuaded her from so doing.

Mr. Cornellis brightened at the news. 'Really, Josephine,' he said, 'luck is on your side.'

She did not answer him, but went into the garden after the rector, caught his arm, and said: 'Tell him—tell him, if he be alive, that I send him my humble love. He has only to hold up his finger, and I will come to him. Tell him all—he must now know all.'

'Say nothing to your father about your resolution till my return.'

Thus it came about that the good, kind old man arrived at the 'Magpie.'

On his way from Bideford he had occupied the box-seat, and the coachman had been able to tell him about the wreck. The crew were all lost—how many they were, he did not know; but the captain and a woman, his mother, and six or seven little children, were saved, and were all at the 'Magpie.' 'And looky' here, sir,' said the driver; 'whatever you do, don't drink none of Jacob Corye's beer; it's bad. I reckon it be brewed with Epsom salts. I took a couple o' glasses once, and I couldn't drive the coach next day, I were that pulled down. None of the quality, sir, patronises the "Magpie," only them coastguard—a low lot, sir; and Jacob's beer and Epsom salts agrees wi' them, happen.' He drew his lash across the leader.—'You don't happen to know Jacob, sir?'

'I have not had the honour.'

'You'll please to mind what I have said about his beer, sir.

Jacob is always going on upon his young stock because he can't fatten. He begrudges the money picked up by they who take them off him and put them in rich pastures for a few weeks and then sell them at a great profit. It is all very well for Jacob to grumble that way; but it is my belief that he drenches his bullocks with his beer. I'd be glad to know what becomes of his beer, if he don't give it to the cattle. No Christian—only coastguards—will drink it; and you can't fatten young stock on Epsom salts. I put it to you, sir, as a man of the world and a Church of England minister—can you?' Again he wiped the back of his leader, as tenderly as a fly-fisher wiping the glassy surface of a pool for a trout. 'Looky' here, sir! Them coastguard men took the cap'n of the wreck to the "Magpie" because they drinks there, what no one else in his senses would do, not if he has any respect for his vitals. It do seem a cruel pity that the party there should run the risk of being poisoned, just to oblige the coastguard and Jacob Corye.—You're going to see the cap'n you say, sir. Well, I think—you'll excuse the freedom I take—that you'd be acting as a true minister of religion if you'd caution the cap'n against the "Magpie" beer. It's that lowering, sir, that you, sir, whom I take to be an archdeacon——'

'O dear, no!—nothing of the sort—a simple rector.'

'Even if you was an archdeacon, sir, after a week of that "Magpie" beer you would be a-teetotaling all over the county.'

When Mr. Sellwood descended from the coach, he tipped the driver so generously, that the coachman drew close to him with a radiant smile and said, behind his hand: 'You'll not touch a drop o' that beer, sir; and say a word in season to the cap'n.' As he strolled away towards the tap of the inn where the coach stopped for the night, he said to himself: 'If he was to take half-a-dozen glasses of that beer, it would so lower him altogether, that, for the return journey, he'd give me a sixpence instead o' half-a-crown. A man can't come to greater degradation than that, I reckon.'

Forewarned in this way, the rector of Hanford, after having deposited his portmanteau at the inn where the coach stopped, walked off to the 'Magpie.'

CHAPTER XXXV.

'MAGPIE' BEER.

When the rector appeared at the 'Magpie' Mrs. Cable was pleased to see his genial face, but uncertain how her son would take his visit. She had no doubt that the message of which he spoke was one that would irritate him. In all probability, Josephine asked his pardon; but he was in no humour to grant it. Bessie Cable had ceased to speak to him about his wife. Any allusion to her, however slight, roused his anger; and the only way in which she could keep him quiet was to talk of future plans, or of what the children were doing—how they picked mushrooms on the downs and blackberries in the hedges.

She put her finger to her lips when the rector blurted out his purpose in coming, and beckoned to him to come in with her to the parlour. Then, when he had complied, she asked him to be seated, and standing herself respectfully, told him, with a distressed face and with the tears trembling in her eyes, how matters stood.

The rector listened to her, interrupting every now and then, because he could not keep his tongue quiet; and when she had done, he began to talk. He told her that her whole past history was known to him; and that in his opinion the time had arrived when Richard must be told who was his father, and what the wrong was that had been done to his mother. 'Leave it to me,' said Mr. Sellwood; 'I will tell Richard; but when I stamp on the floor thrice, you must come up; I shall want you.'

'Please, sir, say as little to him as you can about his wife. It has become a craze with him that she is the occasion of every misfortune and trouble that has come upon him. He is an altered man—altered for the worse. I scarce know my gentle, loving Dick any more. I do even believe he has left off saying his prayers.'

'Let me alone,' said Mr. Sellwood. 'I have mixed with all kinds of men and seen all sorts of humours, and I will deal with him discreetly. Now, I will go up, or he will be suspecting that you have been priming me.'

'Will you take anything, sir, after your long journey? Shall I order you—some beer?'

'Beer!' exclaimed Mr. Sellwood. 'On no account.' He dashed up the stairs. '"Magpie" beer—and in a week be lowered to teetotalise the county!'

'How are you?' exclaimed the rector, bursting into the room occupied by Richard. The stairs were very steep, almost like a ladder. He had gone up them fast, and precipitated himself against the frail door, that flew open before his weight. He came in like a blast of healthy cool wind, that drives fogs and miasma away. His hearty red face, his cheery spirits, his crisp manner, had a momentarily salubrious effect on the sick man, whose brain was clouded with the fever-fogs that rose from his festering heart. He put out his hand, and the rector shook it.

The rector was one of those men who carry with them wherever they go a sense of substantiality. Men in an uncertain position, pecuniary or social, have ever a crack in them. They cannot help it—it is inevitable. But the rector was a gentleman by birth, a man of private means, an incumbent in an established church, of hereditary orthodoxy, who no more changed his opinions than he changed his banker; who no more dreamed of insecurity in his position than he dreamed of giving up the 'Guardian' or of going through a course of Zola. A man with an uncertain position is a man with a very thin skin, and he is always supposing that he is being tickled, or pinched, or impinged upon by those about him, wilfully, and he resents these touches as personal affronts. But a man who has been a gentleman since he fed out of a silver spoon as a baby, and who has never overdrawn his account at the bank; who, like certain Alpine plants, knows perfectly his own level, and that he will get frozen if he creeps above it, or stifled if he descends beneath it, is confident, thick-skinned, never imagines and resents a slight. He pities the unfortunates who do not appreciate his worth, and would help them freely out of his purse, however grossly they might have insulted him, should they need assistance. Such a man is a rhinoceros as to hide; not arrows or spears, only conical rifle bullets, pierce his skin. But the triple-hided rhinoceros is the gentleman incumbent in an established church, who knows that his tithes must be paid, and that nothing short of a revolutionary explosion can shake the establishment. Such a man imposes

by his presence, by his confidence in himself; and when the rector burst into Richard's room, Richard, who was disposed to be angry at having been pursued from the east to the west by one of Hanford, was unable to look surly and turn his face to the wall and keep his hand in bed.

'Parson Sellwood,' said Richard Cable, 'I won't say that I'm not glad to see you; but if you come with a message to me, I must ask you not to deliver it. I can have no more communication with one who has hurt me past the power of forgiveness. I don't want ever to hear her name again. I wish I may never see her face. I curse the day that we met. She came to me in storm, and I put out my arms and took her into my vessel. And in return she has pursued me till she has thrown me and my little ones out of our house, our home, cast us up, shipwrecked waifs, on a strange shore, and me flung out with an injury that will never be got over. That she has hurt my body, matters little—I could have forgiven that; but she has crushed and crippled also my child. Little Bessie and I are both wrecks; my home is wrecked, my happiness is wrecked, my faith is wrecked—and she has done it, she alone!' He turned his head away.

'Cable, my good fellow,' said the rector, taking a chair and seating himself in it a little way from the bed, where he could watch Richard, 'the message I bring you must be told.'

'I will not hear it.'

'The person who gave it me urged it on me before we parted.'

'Take it back to her unuttered. I throw it in her face.'

'I beg your pardon. The person is not a she.'

'What!—the message is not from my—from her?'

Mr. Sellwood evaded a direct answer. 'As I came along on the coach, I had a most earnest message imparted to me to convey to you.'

'She has come! She is here! She is below!' almost screamed Cable. 'Let her not come near me, or touch one of my children!'

'The coachman was very particular that I should remember to advise you on no account to touch the "Magpie" beer. It is made with Epsom salts.'

Richard turned his head sharply round and stared at the rector.

Mr. Sellwood maintained a face of the utmost gravity.

'Poor fellow!' he continued. 'It has disagreed with him; and having a warm heart, he pities you, and repeatedly sent this message to you by me: Don't drink any "Magpie" beer.'

Richard drew a long breath. This was all, was it?

'The "Magpie" beer,' proceeded the rector, throwing one leg over the other and folding his hands and twirling his thumbs, 'is reported to be lowering; and my good friend the coachman believed that no one but a coastguardman could drink it long without becoming a teetotaler.'

Richard still stared at his visitor.

'The "Magpie" beer,' said the imperturbable rector, 'is held to be the real cause why Jacob Corye cannot fatten his young stock. Has he said anything to you about his calves and bullocks that he raises——'

'And rears,' interjected Richard, and sank flat on the bed. 'Too much. In mercy—I have had enough of that. I did not expect this from you, sir. My head turns. I pray you, none of this seesaw about raising and rearing and fattening.'

'You wish me to change the topic?'

'By all means, sir, or I shall go mad. That Jacob Corye comes in here with his pipe and his jug of beer——'

'Never touch it,' interrupted the rector.

'And talks of naught else but the raising and rearing and the fattening of young stock, till, in spite of my thigh, I think I must jump out of bed and run away.'

'Is it a fact that he feeds his young stock on beer?'

'I don't believe a word of it, sir.'

'Or that there is Epsom salts in his beer?'

'I've not tried it; I can't say.'

'When I heard of the properties of that beer—I was so troubled in mind at the danger you ran, that I came at once to see, to bring you the message and warn you of your danger.'

Richard raised himself in the bed slightly. 'Sir,' he said, 'I do not understand. You did not come all the way from Hanford to caution me against the "Magpie" beer—did you?'

'No. I cannot say that. The coachman spoke to me about it; but—as you ask *what* the real motive of my journey was, I do not object to tell you.'

Then Richard became agitated. 'I heard you speak down stairs. You have a message to me from—from *her*. I will not receive it.'

'You need not,' answered the rector with placidity. 'But it does my heart good to hear you have not touched the "Magpie" beer. I have come here to talk to you about your father.'

'My father!' Again Richard stared at his visitor.

'You ran away from Hanford in such a hurry,' continued the rector, 'that those who desired to communicate with you after your father's death——'

'My father is dead!'

'And were at liberty to do so,' proceeded Mr. Sellwood, 'had not the opportunity. I may tell you candidly that I have only recently learned the circumstances of your parentage—only since your abrupt departure. In the matter of his estate, which you may justly claim——'

'He was rich!—left money!' gasped Richard.

'Excuse me, Cable, but you are rather given to interrupt. When you turn a tap, a stream flows out; but if you put your finger in the way, an even flow is diverted into spirts and splashes. If you will allow me to tell the story in my own quiet way, without breaks, it will be more consequent, and easier for me to tell and you to follow.' Then he stamped thrice on the floor; and immediately Mrs. Cable came up. 'I desire you to be present,' said Mr. Sellwood, 'whilst I tell Richard your story, and concerning his own father, that you may confirm me when I am right and correct me when wrong.'

Richard looked uneasily at his mother. 'I do not wish to hear the story,' he said bluntly.

The rector understood him, and looking him steadily in the eye, said: 'It is a story which, though it tells of wrong done to your mother, tells of nothing but what makes for her honour. She is a woman'—he rose and bowed to Bessie—'I could almost envy you to be able to call her your mother—a woman I always respected, one whom now I revere.' Then he sat down again.

Cable was touched, softened; he put out his hand to his mother and clasped hers. Their eyes met. The little cloud of doubt which had always hung on his mind was gone. His mother was irreproachable. He had felt it must be so, and yet he was not sure. Then he turned to the rector and said: 'Thank you, sir—thank you for that.'

'Now, Cable, you must listen to me patiently and without interruption—I hate interruptions—whilst I tell you the entire truth.'

Then he told Richard what he knew. It was the merest outline of a life-story, which Bessie could have filled in with a thousand particulars, but which were now unnecessary. Mr. Sellwood told the story with delicacy, avoiding the slightest reproach on the memory of the dead man, casting the blame on his relations, perhaps exaggerating the pressure that was brought upon him to induce him to consent to the annulling of the marriage.

As Richard listened, his eyes were fixed on his mother, and his thought throughout was, what she had endured, and with what silent dignity she had borne her wrong.

'And now, Cable,' continued the rector—'now I come to speak about Josephine.'

Instantly, at the sound of her name the man's face altered. He let go his mother's hand, and gathered up the sheet about his ears and shouted: 'I will not hear about her; I will receive no message from her. I would to God I could forget her!'

'Do not act like a child, Cable,' remonstrated Mr. Sellwood. 'I must speak——'

'But I will not listen,' retorted the maimed man.

The rector looked at Bessie, and she at him. What was to be done?

Just then, up the stair came the host with a jug of beer in his hand. 'Well, I never!' exclaimed Jacob Corye. 'A parson in the "Magpie!" This is the first time this has happened. 'Well, sure, this is an honour; and, sir—if I may make so bold—you'll drink the "Magpie" beer, and no better was ever brewed, to the good-luck of the house; and to the mending of the cap'n, you shall drink a second, and no charge for either.'

'My good friend——' protested the rector, backing.

'Nay; I'll take no refusal,' insisted Jacob. 'My beer is famous, and you shan't have to pay for it. First time a parson has come over my drexil [threshold] and stood between my derns [jambs]. Drink, sir!—Nay, parson! Drain it to the bottom, to the good-luck o' the "Magpie;" and I'll fill it again to the mending of the cap'n's thigh. Now, sir!—Nay, drink away, to the last drop; there's more coming.—Now, sir, what do you say to "Magpie" beer?'

CHAPTER XXXVI.

YET.

Mr. Sellwood walked back to his inn, carrying within him two jugs of 'Magpie' beer, and the equally salt and sour conviction that he had failed with Richard. He had not been able to convey to him Josephine's message; he had not been able to tell him of her resolution to make over Gotham's property to him. Cable was in that touchy and obstinate state of mind that he refused to allow the smallest reference to his wife.

How the characteristics of the mother came out in the son under similar provocation! As, under the influence of pleasure or pain, of strong passion, of death-faint, likenesses never before noted appear on a face, so is it with mental and spiritual characteristics. Long years may pass without any resemblances having been traced, and then, all at once, the son, under exciting conditions or numbing sorrow, reproduces the modes of thought, follows the lines of his parents' conduct in similar situations. Bessie Cable had been silent for many years, burying her grievance in her heart, brooding over it, showing it to none; and now, her son, staggering under a blow, fell into the same course, and doggedly refused to allow her who had struck him to be mentioned in his presence.

The rector was a sanguine man. He buoyed himself in the confidence that everything would come right in the end; but he was forced to admit to himself that this end was a long way off in the case of Cable and Josephine. Those qualities in the man which had made him estimable before—his steadiness of purpose, his reserve, his self-respect, his patience in the midst of difficulties—combined now to impede a reconciliation. He had taken his resolution, and would adhere to it with iron tenacity. He would confide his wrongs to no one; take counsel from no one, be swayed by no one. His galled dignity would harden into stubborn pride; his patience would make him endure every extremity without a murmur, rather than yield. Mr. Sellwood saw that the task he had set before himself, and which had presented itself to him at first as easy, was one beyond his powers of performing. He went in a meditative mood to the telegraph office, and sent a communi-

cation to his wife at Hanford concerning those who had been lost in the wreck; but he sent none to Josephine. He did not know how to couch his message in a few words. He walked home to the inn and called for a drop of brandy, to correct the influences of the 'Magpie' beer, and looked about for writing materials. He would send Josephine a letter. He speedily disposed of the brandy; but the letter was not so easily managed. What was he to say? That the Cables were safe, but that Richard had injured his thigh; that they had lost everything except a small sum of money that Richard had carried on his person, and which, therefore, had not fallen into the hands of the salvors. He might write this, but it would have the effect of bringing the impetuous Josephine there; he was sure of that; and the result would be to aggravate the estrangement. He had his pen in his mouth, biting the end of the quill and ripping the feathers off it with his teeth, with a puzzled and distressed look on his honest face, when the waiter opened the door and said that Mrs. Cable wished to speak with him.

'Show her in,' said the rector, drawing a sigh of relief. Perhaps she could help him out of his difficulty: anyhow, her interview with him would delay the execution of his embarrassing task.

'Sit down, Mrs. Cable—sit down. Just wired to Mrs. Sellwood about the poor fellows. She will go round and see their families and break the news to them. She is a wonderful woman—wonderful in these painful cases—has such tact; I do not know what I should do without her. Sit down, do. I've'—apologetically—'been taking just a drop, only a drop of brandy, neat; did not feel quite myself within. Had a good deal to upset me of late.' He pointed with the end of his pen at the little bottle and glass. A long curl of ripped feather hung from the quill. He had pulled it off with his teeth, in his perplexity, as if the solution to his difficulty was to be found under the outer cortical, as a woodpecker seeks its food under bark and moss on tree-boughs.

'I have been writing—that is, I have begun a letter. No. Upon my word, I have only begun to think about beginning one, and have got no further into it than "My dear Josephine." If it were a sermon I should have got on famously by this time; but—I am pulled up at the very outstart. I can't get on. I hope you have brought me something satisfactory, which I can say.'

Mrs. Cable's handsome face was troubled. 'I suppose, sir, I did wrong, harbouring my resentment against Gabriel for so many, many years; and now the chastisement has come on me. Richard said that as he had maimed little Bessie, she had maimed him, and that this is a law. As I was unforgiving, so now is my son unforgiving. I was hardened for more years than I like to say, and I doubt if he will yield sooner. I am a woman, with a woman's weakness; and he a man, with a man's strength.'

'But then,' resumed the rector, 'it makes all the difference that your resentment was against a man, and his is against a weak girl.'

Bessie shook her head. 'Gabriel, heaven knows, was weak enough.'

'He never sought to make amends to you. Josephine is full of self-reproach, and is thoroughly in earnest in her desire for reconciliation.'

'It cannot be,' said Mrs. Cable, after a moment's consideration. 'If he forgave her to-day, they would be apart again to-morrow. They have nothing in common; with the best wishes to be happy together, they could not unite. There's a way of the weft and a way of the woof in everything—in human natures, as in brown holland or silk velvet. If you join two pieces of the same material with the weft of one across the woof of the other, there'll be puckers for ever. You may wash and pull and iron to get them smooth; but you wash into fresh puckers, and you pull apart and iron into creases. I leave you to judge how it must be when you stitch together sailcloth and satin across each other's grain.'

'What am I to say?' asked the rector despairingly. 'I must write to Josephine. She is in great trouble. As for your theory, I don't hold it. There is give and take in all married life. Bless me! do you think Mrs. Sellwood and I agreed together from the first like bread and butter? Cable and Josephine have not been together three months, and are they to fly apart at the first tiff!'

'There is give and take where the joining is between two cut the same way, weft *or* woof. Then when one pulls, the other gives.'

'Mrs. Sellwood and I had our tiffs. Why—I remember distinctly the second week of our marriage, she—that is, I—— Well, never mind particulars; we were both in the wrong. It was a rainy day, and horribly cold, at Mürren,

several thousand feet above the sea, and in close proximity to glaciers. Nothing to do; no books but odd volumes of Tauchnitz; no heating apparatus in our room. I wrapped myself up in a *duvet* and stood at one window looking out into the rain; and she wrapped herself up in a *duvet* and looked out at the rain from another window; and we would not speak to each other. We were both cold, both cross, and both in the wrong, and ashamed, or too proud to own it. I thought then I had made a mistake in marrying her, and I believe a very similar idea lodged in her head. It was wet and clammy and cold in our room, that detestable day at the Hôtel du Silberhorn at Mürren. I know that I used my pocket-handkerchief, and so did she. We were all right again next day, when the sun shone. I got up early and picked her a bunch of Edelweiss and gentians; and she—she mended one of my braces for me which I had broken out. We made it up then—I have no patience with Cable; he must come round. Why, he can't be in a more miserably uncomfortable condition than I was that morning at Mürren, scrambling about after Alpine flowers—wearing one suspender!'

Bessie shook her head. The cases were hardly analogous.

'Josephine is humbled,' he went on. 'There is infinite good in the dear girl; but she has been mismanaged—I will not say by whom. She has—she always has had a true and sound heart; but she has been allowed her own way too much, and permitted to exercise her temper without check. She is headstrong, because she has been almost forced by circumstances to decide on her own course for herself; but she is a true woman—a true woman,' repeated the old rector, standing up. 'I'm the last to conceal, to deny her faults; but—there is sterling stuff in her. She's a dear girl, a good girl.' He walked to the window and looked out. Presently he came back to the table. 'Look here, Mrs. Cable. Do you suppose that I have not had crows to pluck with Josephine? I do not mind confiding to you—but let it go no further—that I have had a crow as big as an albatross and as black as pitch to pluck with her. She hurt me where I am most sensitive to pain. Are you aware that my boy proposed to her, and that she refused him—threw him over for your Richard? A father has feelings. He is proud of his son, when that son is good and has not cost him an hour of uneasiness; and a father turns somewhat rusty against a young hussy who snaps her fingers in his face. But I forgive her. Indeed,

I may say that I value her infinitely higher now than I did before.—Do you know those horrible little pieces of money one gets in Austria—ten and twenty kreutzer bits, of base metal washed over with silver? They look very well when new; but with use, the silver rapidly rubs off, and you get the tarnished brass beneath. A lot of women are like that; and the rub and turn about, the daily friction of married life, brushes away all the external gloss and plate. With Josephine, it is just the reverse—the brass is the outer work, and the sterling silver below. Why, is Cable to be angry and cast her away because of the brass? Let him take her and try her, and he will soon come on the precious metal.' He rang the bell. 'Excuse me; I must have another glass of cognac. That "Magpie" beer—two pints was too much. I shall be quite upset.—But, Mrs. Cable, I leave it to you to reason with your son. He rolls himself up like a hedgehog when I come near and breathe a word about Josephine. He does not know what a treasure he has got in her. Tell him that I envy him his possession. I should be glad if my son had her instead.—Bless my soul! does he want his wife to be a turnip or a mangold? I suppose you never heard of Rübezahl, the mountain spirit, did you? who carried off a princess, and to supply her with companions and ladies-in-waiting, transformed turnips into young damsels. Let me tell you, and tell Cable through you, that the manufacture continues at a brisk rate. I have met scores of young ladies who I could swear were nothing but transformed turnips. Josephine is not one of these; she has character—she is a real woman.—I am warm—it is not the brandy, it is my feelings which heat me.'

'You see, sir, the difficulty is that both of them are strong-willed in their own ways.'

'But Josephine is bent now on doing what is right.—Judge for yourself, Mrs. Cable. When she learned who Richard really was, at once, without consulting me or Mrs. Sellwood or any one, she made up her mind that she had no right to Mr. Gotham's property. She would not have Richard enriched through her, but be herself enriched through him. She makes over everything absolutely to him. Is not that a proof of determination and of right principle?'

'In the first place,' answered Mrs. Cable, 'let me say that I am quite sure Richard will not accept the property. I would not myself touch a penny of it; and he shares my pride. If his father did not choose to acknowledge him,

Richard will accept nothing of what he has left. I am as sure of that as if I heard Richard say so.'

'But—will not Josephine's disinterestedness touch him? He must see how right-minded she is.'

Bessie shook her head. 'Mr. Sellwood,' she said, after thinking deeply for a few minutes, 'I allow she must be strong to decide to do this. But strength in her will never touch Richard and bring him to take her in his arms again. It is weakness, and not strength, that appeals to him. He is a man with the heart of a mother. You do not understand. A mother will let herself be cut to pieces rather than that the feeblest child she bears should be hurt. The feebler the child, the more she loves it—the more she will endure for it. The more the child frets and cries, the greater her devotion to it. There are men with mothers' hearts, men who may admire what is strong, but are touched, and who love only what is weak.' She shook her head again. 'No; only in weakness can Josephine recover him. When Gabriel Gotham was rich and at his ease, I nursed my pride and my resentment; but when he was dying, with no one that loved him by, no one even to care for him, to stay his head and wipe the sweat from his brow—then I could not hold out any longer; all my pride went down like a tent when the pole gives way. I know Richard, and I see my own nature in him. He is purposeful, and will not be turned when he has set his head in one direction.'

'At all events,' said Mr. Sellwood, 'you will let him know what Josephine has done. Impress on him that she has made over everything to him. Whether he chooses to take it or not, all that Mr. Gotham bequeathed to her is now your son's. If he refuses to take it—it accumulates for his children. Josephine only delays to hear what I have to tell her about Richard Cable, before executing the requisite deeds. Tell your son that he must appoint some one as his agent, to look after the estate, and care-keepers to take charge of the house, for Josephine will vacate the Hall and leave Hanford.'

Mrs. Cable remained thinking, with composed face and a stern look, usual with her, on her brow. 'I will tell him the main matter,' she said after a long consideration; 'but all the particulars you must tell him to-morrow. I will go to him now and prepare him. You come, sir, if you will be so good, in the morning and see him.' She rose in her digni-

fied manner, made an old-fashioned courtesy and left the room.

When she had gone, the rector put his hands under his coat-tails and walked about the room. 'After having been bitten by a mad dog,' he said to himself, 'the best thing to do is to run or walk till one drops, so as to work off the poison from the veins. I'll do the same with that "Magpie" ale. I feel it in me still. I'll go out. And, by the way, I'll see if there be any toyshops in the place where I can get some two-penny trifles to amuse the little Cables to-morrow.'

On reaching the 'Magpie,' Bessie Cable went directly to her son's room and discharged the obligation she had taken on herself. She told what she had to say plainly without comment, confining herself to the bare narration.

Richard listened without interrupting her. His face had acquired some of the sternness which hers had gathered during years of trouble and self-compression. It was now very stern. When she had done, he spoke in reply with a firm voice: 'Mother, I will have none of my father's possessions, because he never called me son. It is indifferent to me what She may decide, how she may dispose of them. Neither she nor his possessions concerns me.'

Mrs. Cable breathed freely. Her son thought in the matter of the Hanford estate like herself. She had felt convinced he would so think; but it was a satisfaction to her to hear him so express himself.

After a short pause, he went on: 'Mother, I will not stay another day here. Whilst you have been absent, I have called up Jacob Corye, and I have told him that we would all leave to-morrow.'

'It is impossible.'

'We all leave to-morrow for St. Kerian. I will not stay here. The parson has followed and found us, and She will be coming next. I know she will. She only waits to hear that he has seen us, that she may come and see us also.'

'She is very sorry, thoroughly repentant. She sends you her humble love.'

'I refuse her love, as I refuse the Hanford estate. I will not see her again. I cannot forgive her. I will not forgive her. I should hate her as much if she came kneeling to me as if she came scoffing at me. She is false and cruel. I always thought that was a queer passage in Scripture about the unpardonable sin. I can understand it now. She has sinned

the sin unto death against me, and I will never forgive her in this world or the next.' His eyes began to flame with wrath again; the mention of Josephine was like the poking of the fire in a forge—it made the glare and heat break forth in spurts and sparks.

'Richard,' said his mother, 'you cannot go to-morrow.'

'Go, I will,' he said, moving impatiently in his bed. 'I have ordered Jacob Corye to get me a waggon with trusses of straw; and I will lie on them, and the children can sit about me and in the corners. I shall go mad if I stay here, thinking every moment that I hear her hand on the door, her foot on the stair, and that next moment I should see her come into my room. If she came—lame though I be, I would leap out of the window to escape her.'

'Richard!'

'I cannot stay here. I must go to St. Kerian to the house that belongs to us. That at least will be my own home; there I can be master, and shut the door in her face, if she dares to pursue me thither. Here I am in an inn, and an inn-door is open to every one.'

'Richard,' said Bessie Cable gravely, 'are you afraid of her?'

He did not answer for a moment, but at last he said: 'I always was afraid of her, from the moment I saw her when we were cast on the sandbank.'

'No, Richard,' said Mrs. Cable suddenly, 'it is not true. You are not afraid of her. You are afraid of your own self. You love her still, as much as ever; and I say—she will conquer you—*yet*. I cannot see into the future; God knows how. Perhaps, as your father conquered me, through weakness; but the time will come, as it came to me. She will conquer you, in spite of all you set up between you, all your turning away, all your anger and resentment; she will conquer you—*yet*.'

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE DIVER.

'My dear Josephine,' said Mrs. Sellwood, 'I can't quite follow you. Why should you not become a governess, if you really are bent on earning your livelihood? I cannot endure the thought of you taking a menial position.'

'Is not that of a governess menial?'

'Hardly so. At least, a lady can maintain her position as a governess; but when she becomes'—she hesitated—'something else, I mean something lower, it makes all the difference in the world.'

'But, dear Mrs. Sellwood, I want to step down into that inferior class, to be able to see with their eyes, hear with their ears, think with their brains, and throb with their passions.'

'It is quite unnecessary,' said Mrs. Sellwood. 'I can do that. You can do it without any quixotism. With them, it is as with all satellites—they reflect the light of their sun; that is, of the social sun, the lady of the house, or the gentleman, round whom they move. The butler always assimilates himself to the manners and modes of thought and expression of his master; and the lady's-maid to those of her mistress. Of course, they never reach their glory; they are, so to speak, pitched in a lower key. They repeat their superiors in an inferior sphere. It is like the echo to the human voice. The same words repeated, but a tone or a semitone, and broken—reflected back. I have known butlers who really might have been mistaken for gentlemen, and ladies'-maids with really very pretty manners.'

Josephine shook her head meditatively. 'Don't you think, Mrs. Sellwood, that the similarity may be external only? I have heard parrots speak like Christians; indeed, I have been told by my father of one which said: "No primogeniture! Down with the House of Lords! Tichborne for ever!" But it had a parrot's mind, for all that.'

'Well,' said the rector's wife, 'more than half the people in the world have parrotical minds, if I may so express myself; they merely repeat what they hear, without attaching sense to the words. It is exceptional to find a person who thinks as well as speaks. Servants are nothing but human parrots; they repeat more than the words; they repeat the ideas, prejudices, manners, even voices of their superiors, in an exaggerated and somewhat grotesque form. Why, half the words they use they do not understand; I mean those of Latin and Greek origin—perambulator, affidavit, telegraph, bicycle, and so on.'

'They understand what these words mean, but not their derivation.'

'We know both. The words convey more to our minds

than to theirs. Surely you can imagine yourself ten degrees stupider than you are, and you at once descend to the menial mind.'

Josephine was still unsatisfied. 'I do not know that,' she objected. 'I fancy we who are cultured can no more understand the mind of the uneducated, than a man can follow the thread of ideas that traverses the brain of a horse.'

'They have no threads of ideas—only thread-ends which they pick up from us. We, who are educated, have our ideas and our reason; and we work out problems, and we throw down our thread-ends and conclusions; and the uneducated take them up and tangle them together into a ball in their brains.'

'I do not believe it, Mrs. Sellwood,' said Josephine. 'Have you ever seen those mats and rugs made by cottagers out of bits of coloured cloth and list? They weave them into some kind of pattern, but the main fabric of the mat is strong hempen twine. This twine is made into loops, and the fag-ends of coloured cloth are slipped through the loops and gripped and drawn together. These mats have wonderful wear in them, because of the strength and tenacity of the hempen substructure. I quite allow that the lower order of men have not broadcloth minds, have minds made up, as you say, of scraps of culture cast aside by their superiors; but they do weave them into some sort of pattern, and make them into serviceable textures. What I want to learn is, what is the substructure of hemp, what is the grasping, assimilating, organising faculty in the minds of the uneducated? I can never find that out without going among them.'

'You will not find it out if you do go among them; there is no such substructure as you imagine.'

'But, Mrs. Sellwood, how do you know? How can you know, never having been inside the circle of the uneducated?'

'I can judge by what I see,' answered the old lady touchily. 'You are like those Australian explorers who went into the heart of the island expecting to find mountains and lakes, pastures, gold mines, and nearly perished in the infinite monotony of desert they traversed.'

'I am not going to make any discoveries; I do not anticipate finding a land flowing with milk and honey, or hope to induce colonists from the upper classes to come down and camp in it. I go because my husband belongs to that rough

and stony land, and I wish to inhabit it with him, to share his privations and pleasures.'

The rector's wife said nothing. She was doing some woolwork, a group—Ruth and Boaz.

'Mrs. Sellwood,' said Josephine, 'I am not sure that I shall not find an agreeable freedom from formality in the life below the line. Are we not all, who are above it, set to work our lives out like that piece of wool embroidery on which you are engaged? We have to make our stitches exactly according to pattern, and put in exactly the regulated number, and the proper tints. The result is extremely unsatisfactory when the miserable piece of work is done.—Do look at Boaz! His eyes are square; and Ruth's face in profile has a nose resembling a flight of steps. Because the social pattern set before us requires us to make square eyes and staircase noses, are we to do so servilely in defiance of all the canons of art and truth?'

'The nature of the woolwork stitch will not allow of any other arrangement. Allowance is made for the exigencies of canvas.'

'But why should we go on making steppy noses and square lustreless eyes, because the canvas and stitch require it? When you have done your Boaz and Ruth, what is it? It is not a picture—it is a caricature.'

'It is a banner-screen, and will shelter many a face from the fire, and perhaps recall me to the thoughts of my grandchildren, when I am dead and turned to dust.'

'You have run off with the illustration away from what we were discussing, and which this embroidery was meant only to illustrate.'

'I know perfectly what you mean, and I am thinking of that. Suppose our lives are formal, worked out patiently in little squares; first a stitch from right to left, and then another from left to right; now with wool of one tint, then with wool of another—well, it makes a complete whole. There is system in it; there is forethought. It is a work of great patience and perseverance, and it will always tell that tale to generations to come. But the lives you speak of are not so systematised; they are like the needlework of one colour-blind—a jumble, with no idea in the worker's mind how to make a stitch, how to keep in line, to strain his wool, to match his shades. When, however, the untaught and undisciplined comes into service, is brought into contact with

the highly civilised and educated and disciplined, then he or she begins—involuntarily, may be—to copy what is seen; just as the barbarians who invaded the Empire copied the civilisation of Rome. The menial begins at once to sort the wools and to practise stitches; and the result is a copy—sometimes a copy in ill-matched colours, and with irregular lines—of the work of the master or mistress. As far as it is a copy, it is interesting. Where it is not—it is void of everything attractive; it repels.'

'I am not convinced,' said Josephine. 'I will tell you whether I am wrong and you right, after I have made the experiment.—Mrs. Sellwood, have you ever read "The Devil on Two Sticks?"'

'Good gracious, no! It is not proper for one to read.'

'There is no harm in it. Asmodeus takes the student through the air over Madrid, and removes the roofs of all the houses, so that he can see what goes on within: the story of life in every house, in every room, is revealed to him. Do you know I often think of that when I am with people? I consider what mysteries, what romances, what workings are within these little chambers, with the two eyes as windows; and I long infinitely for a devil to remove the scalp and let me see what is within. Neither you nor I, nor any member of our order, knows in the least what is going on in the great city of the commonalty below us. We want to have the roofs lifted, that we may look in and see the stirring in the brains, and then only shall we understand the thoughts and prejudices, the beliefs, the doubts, and the poetry of Demos.'

'And the commonplace,' added Mrs. Sellwood.

'I will tell you all, when I have seen,' exclaimed Josephine vehemently.—'Dear Mrs. Sellwood, I have been brought in contact with one—the best of men—belonging to that city of mystery. He could not understand me, and I could not understand him. It was as if I belonged to the flying island Laputa, and he to the country of the Houyhnhnms.'

'My dear, you are referring to "Gulliver's Travels."'

'Of course, Mrs. Sellwood.'

'But—ladies never read further than the voyage to Lilliput.'

'I believe they are supposed to limit themselves to the infinitely little.'

Neither spoke for a few moments after this. Mrs. Sellwood was offended. She, as well as her husband, allowed,

and always had allowed, Josephine to speak freely before them. They knew, or suspected, that the influences at home were unsatisfactory; and they had encouraged frankness in her, that they might get to understand her mind, and be able to give some direction to her thoughts, and exercise some check on her inconsiderate impulses. But in permitting this freedom, they had to endure the sharpness of her tongue, which sometimes cut the old people unpleasantly, drawn athwart old prejudices and traditional principles.

'Did you ever read Schiller's "Diver," Mrs. Sellwood?' asked Josephine.

'Yes, dear—long ago. I do not remember much about it, except that a king threw a goblet of gold into Charybdis, and sent down a page after it.'

'Exactly. And the page, when he came up, was to tell the Sicilian king what he had seen in the depths of the sea. This is what he related:

> Now the purple darkness of the deep
> Lay under my feet like a precipice,
> And though here the ear must in deafness sleep,
> The eye could look down the sheer abyss,
> And see how the depths of these waters dark
> Are alive with the dragon, the snake, and the shark.

I am quoting an English version of the poem, Mrs. Sellwood, as I daresay my German may be inexact:

> In horrible consciousness there I stayed,
> *One* soul with feeling and thought endued,
> 'Mid monsters, afar from earthly aid,
> Alone in that ghastly solitude!
> Far, far from the sound of a human tone,
> In depths which the sea-snake hath called her own.

I am the diver. I am going down into the mysterious depths where the whirlpool swirls, and where, as Schiller says, "a new sea springs from the old sea's breast." But I do not go down because I like the abyss, or think it a habitable place, or particularly desire to cultivate the acquaintance of the dogfish, dragon, and octopus, but to recover the golden chalice of my husband's esteem.'

'My dear Josephine,' answered the rector's wife, 'if I remember the story aright, the page recovered the goblet only because it lodged on a shelf above the abyss tenanted by these monsters. The king cast in the goblet a second

time, and then it fell into the uttermost depth, and from thence the lad never rose.'

'It was so. And so, under water there is the shelf, and below it the vast profound. My husband does not belong to that region of horrors. His golden heart has never sunk to that. As there are stages in our flying island Laputa, so are there shelves below the sea.'

'Very well,' said Mrs. Sellwood. 'You go down under water to the first terrace, and you will find—you yourself admit it, no monsters there—only respectables. I can tell you what you will see—because the dredge brings them up—winkles, cockles, and oysters.'

Josephine began with her sweet pure voice to sing the Mermaid's song in *Oberon*:

> O wie wogt es sich schön auf der Fluth,
> Wenn die müde Welle im Schlummer ruht!

Then, for the first time since Richard had gone, she laughed, not with her old bright, ringing tones, but with a tinge of sadness, and said: 'Oh, Mrs. Sellwood, I shall come up a mermaid, belonging to both realms, that above, and that below, understanding both, and at home in both. What experiences I shall have gone through!'

Mrs. Sellwood threw down her work and put her arms round Josephine, drew her to her bosom, and kissed her. 'You belong to a different order of souls from me, dear child,' she said. 'I am not heroic. I see that you have generous and true impulses, and go your own way. In that, you differ from me and such as me. I understand that, by an ingenious contrivance, locomotives are constructed for use in war-time which lay down their own rails as they go along—of course, travelling very slowly, and always running on rails of their own laying. That is like me, and persons so constituted as I am; we always travel on rails—rails of our own laying. You are not like that; you make furrows.'

'Yes,' said Josephine sorrowfully; 'I tear up the road, throw about stones, and wound passers-by, and upset myself.'

'As you are bent on this experiment—of which I do not quite approve, it is so foreign to anything that I should have considered proper—I am resolved that you shall take a shelf in very shallow water. You must allow me to determine that for you. I have a sister, Miss Otterbourne, who lives near Bath, a very kind old lady, has her prejudices, as is

usual with old maids—good, wholesome, well-established prejudices, that hurt no one. She has written to me for a lady's-maid. If that situation will do, take it. You will have dived, but we hold you by a hair.'

Josephine thanked Mrs. Sellwood.

Then the rector came in, and with his fresh face a waft of cool, bracing air. He squeezed Josephine's hand and kissed his wife.

'My dear Charlotte,' said he to the latter, 'we old fogies have antiquated notions, routine courses, that are unsuited to extraordinary emergencies. Josephine has been right. Her heart has told her from the beginning what was to be done. —My child, I have seen him; I have spoken with him. I know all the circumstances. I have had my finger on his pulse. Josephine must come down to his level.'

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ST. KERIAN.

The village of St. Kerian, in Cornwall, lies about ten miles inland from the north-west coast. It lies in a hollow, a valley down which flows a little stream, that has its source in the granite moors that form the backbone of the long peninsula that constitutes the county of the Cornu-British. Up the valley, clothing its sides, where steep, are oakwoods, copse for the most part; and above the copse rise the bald moors, sprinkled with gorse, and in July, pink with heather, and purple shot with heath. The granite tower of the church peeps above some old lime-trees that form an avenue to the porch, and some Scotch firs that rise with flaky boughs from the churchyard boundary. There the rooks build and burden the velvety green foliage with their rough nests. The tower of the church is square, with the pinnacles cut to lean outwards, as the foliation of a crown—a Cornish peculiarity. Near the churchyard, communicating with it by a side-door, is the rectory garden, apparently one great pillow of evergreens, laurel and rhododendron, and myrtle and laurestinus; and out of this green pillow appears the slate roof of the parsonage, sunk so deep in the evergreens that only roof and chimneys appear.

The cottages of St. Kerian are for the most part of kneaded clay—locally called cob—the warmest, snuggest, driest material of which a house can be built; a material, which when used as a garden wall, ripens peaches, grapes, apricots on its warm surface. It sucks in the sun's rays as a sponge, and gives out the heat all night. Stand by a cob-wall after a bright day, when white-frost is forming on the grass, and you feel a warm exhalation streaming from the dry clay. Fruit-trees must blossom when nailed against it; and the blossom cannot do other than set, and having set, must glow and swell and mellow and flush with sweetness. The flower-bed under the cob-wall is one that is rampant, luxuriant, always beautiful. In the winter months it is not bare; it has Christmas roses and aconites; it is throwing up and opening flowers at extraordinary times, and ripening strawberries at periods when no one dreams of strawberries.

A few houses are of stone, and the stone, like the cob, is whitewashed. These houses have slate roofs, and on the slate are orange and white patches of lichen; and on very old slate even masses of golden stonecrop. But the most subdued slate never reaches the softness and sweetness of tone of thatch—the thatch that covers the cob cottages. That is brown and furry and cosy. Verily, the cottars must be princes and princesses to cover their houses with sealskin!

One of the stone houses is the village inn, with the sign of the 'Silver Bowl.' Why this sign? Because the legend told how St. Kerian had gone to sea in a basin of pure silver, and in it had rowed over vast and trackless waters till he reached the land of Paradise. And all the time he was away, a wolf kept watch over his wallet and psalter, that lay on the beach of India.

St. Kerian was, truly, none other than the man in the moon, and the moon was his coracle of silver in which he traversed the dark-blue heavenly seas. But of this the villagers knew nothing. They dimly recollected the old Catholic legend of the miraculous cruise of the patron saint of the parish, and knew that the great silver bowl on the sign-board over the inn referred to the story.

Another stone house belonged to the blacksmith, George Penrose, a plain worthy man, hard working in his forge and out of it: in it, hammering and moulding iron; out of it, digging and growing vegetables in his garden; and especially fond of carnations.

Outside the village, a rifle-shot from the last house that could claim to be in what was locally called the Church-town, stood a poor cottage, built of cob, with a thatched roof. This cottage was but one story high. You could have touched the eaves when standing by it. The door of the cottage opened on the road; but beside it, at one end, was a garden in the shape of an extremely acute triangle; one side was hedged against the road, and the back was hedged against the field. It was obvious at the first glance that this was the cottage of a squatter, who, in times past, when land was of little value, had squatted on a bit of waste ground beside the road, turned it into a garden, and erected the cottage for himself. No one had objected. If the lord of the manor had been told of it, he had laughed and shrugged his shoulders and asked no head-rent. No attempt had been made to dispossess the squatter; and as years passed and he had made no acknowledgment to any man for his house and bit of land, in time he became absolute proprietor of cottage and triangular garden, with as good a right to it, to hold, to devise, to sell, as the best squire in the neighbourhood and the most substantial yeoman in the parish had to their lands. The cottage had been dug out of a pit at the vertex of the garden, where was now a puddle, and a shivering white willow by it; and the triangle of ground had been reclaimed from the roadside by old Jonathan, the father of Zackie and of Bessie Cable's mother.

This was the estate—this, and seventy-eight pounds five shillings and tenpence—which fell as an inheritance to Bessie Cable on the death of her uncle; and to this freehold estate Richard moved with his mother and little children, and into it he settled; Bessie Cable being its sole and undisputed, and, indeed, indisputable possessor. Not another relative in Cornwall, nay, in the wide world, had Uncle Zackie. I am sorry to say it, but it is true, and must be said—the people of St. Kerian did not hail the arrival of the Cables with enthusiasm, were by no means inclined to show them much hospitality. St. Kerian's people were Cornish Kelts to the ends of their fingers and toes, without one drop of Saxon blood in their veins. They were a people who shut themselves up in their exclusiveness, as they were shut in by nature by their moors. It might be true that Bessie Cable was linked to the place by her mother; but her mother had chosen to desert the house of her childhood and 'go foreign;' and Mrs. Cable was

foreign born and bred; she did not even speak like a Cornish woman. All England, even Devon, most of all the eastern counties, was foreign to the Cornishman, foreign as Timbuctoo and Alaska.

The St. Kerian's people did not come out to meet and welcome the new landed proprietor and his family who came into their midst; they looked on him with suspicion and jealousy. Richard Cable, grown peculiarly sensitive and irritable, felt this, and resented it. He would have as little to do as was possible with the St. Kerian's folk. Besides, he was disappointed. The cottage and the land were much smaller than he had expected. *Omne ignotum pro magnifico.* He had imagined a roomy house, with gardens and paddock, and perhaps some out-buildings. He was wofully downcast when he arrived at the hovel in the waggon on the straw. The cottage was plainly furnished, and in tolerable repair. It was obvious that a hard time was before him. He was poor, though a landed proprietor. His estate, like that of so many squires in the present day, would not maintain him. He would have to work, and work hard, to feed the seven little maiden mouths at home, as well as his own and his mother's. Potatoes, as he knew by experience, would go like wildfire; bread would vanish as moisture in the east wind. The three-cornered garden would not grow cabbages and turnips enough for all these little stomachs that demanded of it food daily. Think! Three hundred and sixty-five days make up the year. Multiplied by eight, that makes two thousand nine hundred and twenty meals—only one *per diem* —to be got out of that little garden; and that, moreover, without making any count of food for Richard himself. But they must have supper as well as dinner. For dinner, potatoes; for supper, kail; so that in reality the demands on the triangular patch reclaimed from the roadside would amount —if the father was to eat anything out of it except earth and stones—to six thousand five hundred and seventy meals.

Richard Cable had always been a reserved man. He was now more reserved than of old. At Hanford, he had associated with his mates without ever becoming what they would call 'one of themselves.' At St. Kerian he associated with no one. The Cornish people are inveterate talkers. It is said that a loquacious person can talk the hind-legs off a horse; if so, it is a wonder that any legs remain on the horses in the west. Everything is made to give way to talk—the

most pressing business, the most urgent duties. Indeed, the most imperious call of a Cornishman's nature is to talk. It is said that in the navy the officers are shy of west-country sailors, because they are such talkers. The Cornish are a kindly people, who like their neighbours to be 'free' with them—that is, to run into their houses at all hours for a talk and allow them to reciprocate.

Dicky Cable went near none of the villagers of St. Kerian, hardly spoke to them; when he did, it was on necessary matters. He let them understand that he objected to have his kitchen invaded at all times, and to have his proceedings scrutinised and canvassed. He was a busy man. He had to work for seven little children, and had not time to talk. With him, every minute was precious; it meant a patch on Mary's shoe, threescore stitches in Martha's stocking that he was knitting; the shaping of a wooden head to Bessie's doll; a bit of tilling of the garden that fed them all. Every idle minute sows a weed, said Richard.

The villagers, who grudged the invasion of the parish by foreigners, were not conciliated by Cable's manner; they could not understand that he had other crops to cultivate than good-fellowship.

Mrs. Cable also, in spite of her Cornish blood, was no talker. Had she been a gossip, all would have been well. When you come across a Frenchman in a railway carriage or in a café, he tells you the history of his love, the circumstances of his marriage, and the ages and temperaments of his children; and expects similar confidences on your part. The Frenchman has a pleasure in turning himself inside out before you, like a glove. This is because he is a Kelt, and craves for sympathy. The Cornish are Kelts also, and they overflow with frankness, and exact reciprocity in candour. The St. Kerian people wanted to know the complete history of the Cable family, and demanded it as a right. Bessie would tell nothing. The mother of the children was dead—that was enough for them to know. Of Richard's second marriage not a word was breathed; no suspicion of it entered the St. Kerian imagination, and the Cornish imagination is no sterile faculty. As certain soils will grow all kinds of plants although nothing is sown in them, so with the imaginative faculty: it will produce crops of most varied weeds, growing where you could swear not a seed of fact had been dropped.

The times were hard for Richard. He had recovered so

as to walk about; but he walked lamely and could not go far. Work for which he was suited was not easy to be got. Work by means of which he could live at ease was not to be got at all.

The little patrimony that had come to Bessie Cable melted away. The necessary things to be bought, the doctor's bill, the bill at the 'Magpie,' the feeding and clothing of the little ones—all ate into seventy-eight pounds five shillings and tenpence. Uncle Zackie had but a single bed. Now, several were needed, and they had to be purchased. One cup and saucer, and a single plate, a gridiron and a frying-pan, had sufficed for Uncle Zackie; this would not meet the requirements of nine persons, and had to be supplemented.

Then, again, all the clothes of Richard, his mother, and his children had been 'salved' in the wreck, and were therefore lost to him. It was necessary to buy fresh clothes. What had been 'salved' was past recovery.

Seven little girls! Was not that enough to break a poor man's heart? Was it not selfish and cruel of Polly to spread her wings and fly to a better world and there enter into rest, and leave him alone in this rough world to battle with hunger and cold—with seven little maidens on his back? No wonder that his back began to bend; no wonder that his flesh fell away, and he looked thin and transparent; no wonder his clothes were so poor and patched. But his seven little girls were plump and upright and sturdy and neat. He stinted himself of everything that they might lack nothing. It was a desperate battle, and only strong love could have nerved him to fight it. If Richard Cable could have gone to sea, he might have earned something better than what he could pick up at St. Kerian; but he had either taken a distaste to the sea since his last voyage, or he could not bring himself to leave his children any more.

He went about the parish to the farmers, limping on his stiff leg, and asked for work. Could he hedge? He had never learned the art, and let me tell the reader that hedging is an art, an art which School Boards are killing; it is an art to be acquired in boyhood, and there is hardly a young man nowadays who can hedge. Did he know anything about cattle? He had had no experience, and not a farmer would entrust his cattle to him, that he might acquire experience on them. Could he plough? He had never tried; and ploughing is not to be acquired at any year after fifteen. A walking

postman was needed for five parishes, the pay six-and-sixpence per week; the distance to be walked, fair weather or foul, twenty miles—but then, Richard was lame; so he refused the six-and-six.

The parish authorities, the whole neighbourhood—that is, all five parishes—took it ill that he rejected the office of walking postman so liberally offered him. That he was lame, was his concern, not theirs. He rejected the office because he was proud; he was puffed up with pride because he was a foreigner. What could be expected of a man who had begotten seven little girls and not a boy? Seven little maids! What was to become of them if their father died? They and their grandmother would have to go to the workhouse; and who would have to pay for them there, for feeding, for fattening of them, for clothing, and educating them? Who but the ratepayers? No wonder that, with such a prospect, the ratepayers looked on Richard Cable with a resentful eye.

He got work at last—work for the time being—he took it resentfully, surlily, with gall in his heart—work on the roads.

Since Richard had crossed the threshold, not once had Josephine been named. One might have supposed that, as far as Richard was concerned, no such person existed.

Since he had entered that cottage, no allusion had been made by him or his mother to the fortune of Gabriel Gotham. They had but to make their necessities known, and they could have as much money as they needed. But Richard would have died, his mother would have died, one and other would have sat silent and watched the seven little girls die of starvation rather than touch a penny of that fortune. They were proud, were these Cables, mother and son; their pride was inflexible as iron.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A SPIKE IN THE NEST.

The mind of Mr. Cornellis was at ease. So completely satisfied was he that nothing was to be apprehended which could annoy him, that he went to town 'on business,' as he told his sister and daughter; really, that he might amuse himself, and he remained away from Hanford a fortnight.

When his affairs were in an unsatisfactory condition, and

he saw that only desperate measures could avail, not to recover him, but to stave off a complete break-up, he had begun to draw towards his old associates and dupes. His conversation had acquired a sanctimonious savour, and the cut of his coat had something clerical about it. He laid aside his rather highly coloured ties, and adopted black. A moustache he had been cultivating disappeared. But when Josephine had acquired the fortune of Gabriel Gotham, all necessity for picking up the old threads of his former life passed away, and he dropped once more the acquaintances, and the formalities and restraints he had with a bad grace reassumed under the cogency of adverse circumstances. He was an exceedingly shrewd man, as shrewd as he was unprincipled; he knew the foibles, the follies, the weaknesses of men; but what he did not know, and made no allowance for, were the noble and generous impulses of the heart. He traced all action in life to springs—but these springs were always mean and selfish; consequently, he was occasionally foiled in his calculations.

He did not understand his daughter's nature, because he was unable to understand that she could be actuated by any motives involving self-sacrifice. He respected her intelligence, and he relied on her wit saving her from doing anything injurious to her prospects. Her marriage with Cable had been a puzzle to him; but he supposed that it was due to an unreasoning passion for a time blinding her eyes to her interests. That she regretted her marriage, he had no doubt; that she no longer loved Richard, he was aware, and he was consequently well assured that she would take no steps to bring about a reconciliation, and a repetition of the ridiculous and disagreeable incidents of the past month, which must follow in the train of a reconciliation. As there are two hemispheres in the brain, and we can therefore simultaneously think of two matters at once—as, for instance, we can read aloud, and be meditating at the same time on something different; or we can converse with a visitor, and whilst so doing take an estimate of her dress, and note where the braid is off and a glove is burst—so are there double, and even more than double springs in every heart, and none can tell at once which is in the ascendent. There is always, and there always must be, an element of uncertainty in the determinations, and consequent actions, of every man, for this reason. We cannot tell at once which of the springs, even if we recognise their existence, is the strongest, and what the correcting and con-

trolling force of the other that is acting in opposition. Indeed, it is not usual that any one of the springs asserts itself as a mainspring till late on in life, and in no inconsiderable number of persons none ever does so assert itself.

Mr. Cornellis regarded his fellow-men much as billiard-balls; he had only to walk round the table, level his cue, rest the end between his thumb and forefinger, and strike, calculating to a nicety the angle at which the balls would fly apart; the cannoning and pocketing would follow as a matter of course. All went by rule of dynamics. And Mr. Cornellis would have been right had all his balls been perfectly round, and absolutely solid, and his table nicely levelled. But these were elements in the game that did not enter into his calculation.

It is said that the Englishman rushes into war thoroughly despising his enemy, and that this is the cause of the majority of the disasters which mark the initiation of a campaign. Mr. Cornellis shared the Englishman's contempt for an enemy —that is, for every one with whom he had dealings. He undervalued his powers; he disbelieved in moral force, and consequently made no provision to counteract its effects. Stupidity he could allow for; and when he encountered strong principle, he misjudged it, and eschewed it as stupidity deeper than what he had allowed.

Mr. Cornellis and the rector viewed the world of men from opposed points. The latter was surprised and troubled when he found that other motives swayed men's conduct than truth and honour and love; and Mr. Cornellis was perplexed and angry when he came across those who were not either intensely stupid or wholly self-seeking. Neither liked the other. Mr. Sellwood was forced to mistrust Cornellis; but he never could persuade himself that Josephine's father was as devoid of principle as his clear common-sense obliged him to suspect.

When Mr. Cornellis went to town 'on business,' he gave no address where he might be found; he did not desire to be worried by his sister's letters concerning the trivialities of Hanford life; consequently, his daughter was unable to communicate her intention to him till he was pleased to emerge from the seclusion in which he had kept himself and shrouded his acts whilst in town. When, after a visit to London that lasted somewhat over a fortnight, and had cost him a considerable sum of money, Mr. Cornellis reappeared at Hanford, not much fagged with his business, in a completely new suit,

in the latest fashion, from the best tailor, and with a new diamond pin in his tie, he was not in the smallest degree prepared for the surprise his daughter had in store for him.

Mr. Cornellis had never taken pains to gain his daughter's affections; he was aware that he had not her esteem; there was always present between them an invisible barrier. When two intellects are set in opposition, and the male and elder is aware that the other is its match, there ensues a sense of injury and aversion. It dreads a contest, lest it should sustain a fall. Mr. Cornellis had seen his daughter's mind and character form under his eye with an independence that annoyed him. He had not moulded them—they had shaped themselves. Where he had interfered, his interference had brought about results the opposite to what he designed. The chronic antagonism between them had not broken out into civil war till Josephine had declared her intention to her father of taking Richard as her husband. After one savage passage-of-arms, a truce ensued; the father knew he had gone too far, and he used all his arts to recover the lost ground. The marriage of Josephine had brought her closer to him than she had been in her previous life. She had been forced to acknowledge that he was right in his opposition, and to submit to his guidance. He had acquired an ascendency that satisfied him, and he rashly supposed that this ascendency was final and secure. Mr. Cornellis had written to announce his return, and to order the carriage to meet him at the station. He was surprised to see Josephine on the platform ready to receive him, when he arrived from town by the train he had mentioned. This was an attention he had not anticipated. She was dressed very quietly in her blue serge, and with a close straw bonnet trimmed with navy-blue ribbons.

'Why—Josephine,' said he, taking her arm as he stepped out of the carriage, 'what new fad is this—dressing like a superior domestic?'

'I am glad you have arrived as appointed,' said she, without answering his question. 'Had you come by a later train, I might have missed you. I am going off by the next up-train.'

'Indeed? Whither?'

'Will you come with me into the ladies' waiting-room—there is no one there—or walk with me on the platform, whilst I tell you what I have to say?'

'Well—be sharp. I want to get home, and cannot detain the horses.'

They walked together out of the station along the platform, where there was no one to overhear their conversation.

'You are looking well, papa. I hope you have enjoyed your visit to town?'

'I have been steeped to the ears in business,' he replied. 'I got into Kettner's occasionally, and had something really good to eat, neither over-salted nor under-spiced. When I am a little out of sorts, I run in there and have a bowl of *bisque*. It sets my stomach right when nothing else does—light and nourishing. I am fond of Kettner's, quiet—and good wines. The waiter there knows me, and is attentive.'

'Papa, I am going.'

'So you have told me; but I have not been informed whither.'

'I am going into Somersetshire—near Bath.'

'What for?'

She hesitated. She was a brave girl, but she shrank from the scene that must occur. The rector, aware that the interview would be unpleasant, had volunteered to relieve Josephine of the duty of telling her father what had been determined and done. But she had declined his offer, and had resolved—it must be admitted, with a spice of craft—to break the intelligence to her father almost in public and a minute before she departed. After that quarrel with him which had driven her desperate and made her plunge into the sea, she shrank from a private interview; and she knew that if he were told what she had decided on whilst she remained at Hanford, the house would be insupportable. Whatever he might say, he could not alter her mind. His absence had enabled her to dispose of everything, undisturbed; and now all that remained to be done was to inform him of arrangements already completed; and as soon as this was done and she were away, the better for both.

'For the life of me,' said Mr. Cornellis, 'I cannot see why that precious idiot of a cook of ours should never make *bisque* to my fancy. No great difficulty in pounding prawns, I should have thought.—By the way, Josephine—artichoke soup with crushed almonds is worth living for.'

'Papa, I have something very important to tell you.—Never mind about soups now. I am afraid'—with a touch of her old self—'I am going to salt and flavour your soup not at all to your taste.'

'Go on with what you have to say; I am impatient to be on my way in the carriage.'

'My train will start in five minutes. I have my ticket, and my boxes are labelled. But I have only five minutes in which to tell you something that will surprise and, I fear, annoy you greatly.'

'Upon my word,' said Mr. Cornellis irritably, 'you have the knack of making one uncomfortable. You treat me as the boys treat the plovers. When they have found a nest on the downs, they drive a spiked stick into the ground at the bottom, so that the poor bird cannot sit on her eggs comfortably, and she goes on laying till she has heaped her eggs over the spike, so as to make her seat tolerable. What new stake have you been driving into my home? My whole time and energies are taken up with covering the prickles and goads you fabricate for my torment.'

'You have been from home, papa, so it has not been possible for me to consult you since the rector returned from Cornwall.'

'What did he find there?'

'The yacht was wrecked; but Richard and the children and his mother are saved; the other poor fellows are lost.'

'Things might have been managed better,' growled Mr. Cornellis.

'Poor Richard has injured his thigh, and is likely to be lamed for life.'

'If he be tied by the leg to the Cornish rocks, so much the better. Are you going as the eagle to tear the entrails of your Prometheus?'

'Papa, I have been considering about Cousin Gabriel's legacy. You let me accept it; you let me marry Richard without telling me who Richard was. I have learned that now; and I know that Cousin Gabriel performed an act of gross injustice in not recognising his son and leaving his estate to him.'

'That was Gotham's concern.'

'I have inherited what ought to belong to Richard. I have considered the situation, and I have resolved not to take the legacy.'

'You have taken it.'

'I am going to—no, to be correct—I have already—surrendered it.'

'I do not understand you.'

'I have no right to the estate. When the rector went to Cornwall, I told him to offer it to Richard. You know, papa,

that Cousin Gabriel left everything in trust till I married, and that at marriage I became sole possessor, with entire liberty to do what I liked with the property. I was so sure, when I came to consider matters, that Cousin Gabriel meant the estate to pass to his son, through me, that I could in conscience do no other than transfer it to Richard. I have striven to do what is right, and I have made the transfer.'

'You do not mean——' Mr. Cornellis could not finish the sentence; he had turned the colour of a Jerusalem artichoke.

'I do indeed mean what I say, papa. I have been with the lawyer, and Mr. Sellwood has helped me, and it is all done. The difficulty we have had to contend with is, that Richard absolutely refuses to accept what I offer. I did not think myself justified in retaining any share, and I wanted to make over every penny unreservedly to Richard; but Mr. Sellwood and the solicitor have advised me otherwise, and I have retained an annuity of two hundred and fifty pounds for my separate use as long as I live. But, papa, I had already made up my mind to touch nothing of Cousin Gotham's money—so long as I do not share it with Richard, I mean—till I can receive it from him. So I will not have this annuity for my own self; I give it to you. You shall enjoy that; and, unless Richard objects, which is not likely, you can live at the Hall——'

'On two hundred and fifty!'

'Of course the place must be kept up, and the maintenance of the house and estate will be paid out of the estate. I do not see why you should not continue to live at the Hall; you will have the two hundred and fifty in addition to your own private income, and have the house and garden rent free.'

He turned his face towards her and opened his mouth to speak. The face was livid and quivering with evil passion. Every veil of disguise had fallen; the ugly villainy of the man's soul glared at her out of his eyes. She shuddered. He looked, with his mouth open, as if he could have flown at her and bitten her. He could not speak; he was too greatly agitated to utter a word.

'Shall we turn back towards the station?' continued Josephine. 'I see it is time for me to be getting into my carriage. I have not much more to say. If I have forgotten anything, Mr. Sellwood will supply the deficiency. Richard is angry with me, and he has cause to be angry. I shall never rest till he forgives me and takes me to his heart again. I

have been unworthy of him. I was not well advised; but my own heart was rebellious. I have been proud, and now I am going into the world to learn humility. Papa, Mr. Sellwood will explain to you the course I have elected. I have told Aunt Judith; but she cannot understand. I intend to earn my own livelihood, and earn Richard's respect. There—the bell is ringing; I really must be off. I have taken a third-class ticket. Let my arm go, papa. Say good-bye; we shall not meet again for some time. If I have been unlike a daughter to you and failed in love—I ask your pardon. I fear—I fear that I have driven a spike into the nest that wounds you.'

'That *impales* me,' groaned Mr. Cornellis.

CHAPTER XL.

THE FIRST SHELF.

Miss Otterbourne lived in a handsome old square Queen Anne mansion near Bath. It was built of Bath stone, with rusticated quoins to the angles, with pillars to the grand entrance. A stiff, stately house, with large park-like grounds and beautiful terraced gardens. The house, Bewdley Manor, was about four miles from the station; and when Josephine arrived, a private omnibus was in waiting to receive her and her boxes. The coachman was in half livery, the boy out of it. They had come to fetch a servant, so they wore as little of the badge of servitude as might be, just as the officers of Her Majesty throw off their uniform the moment they are off parade.

'Be you the young lady as is coming to our place?' asked the boy, addressing Josephine.

'If you will explain to me what your place is,' answered Josephine, 'I may perhaps be able to answer your question.'

'Miss Otterbourne is our old lady,' said the boy. 'You take a hold of that end of the box, and we'll give it a hoist and heave it up on the roof. Looky' here; stand on the axle, and you'll get it up.'

'I will call the porter to help you,' observed Josephine coldly.

'As you like, young woman; but mind you—you tip him if he comes and helps.'

Josephine considered a moment; then, without summoning the porter, stepped on the axle, and assisted in lifting her box upon the roof of the omnibus. If she tipped the porter, it would be with Richard's money. She had come to Bewdley to be a servant; she must begin to work at once.

When she sat by herself in the conveyance with her small parcels, she began to realise for the first time the complete change in her circumstances. In the train, she had thought of her father, of Hanford, of Aunt Judith, of the Sellwoods, with a tenderness and melting of the heart which ever and anon filled her eyes. She had spent a happy youth at dear Hanford, following her own whims, going out in her boat as she liked, playing on her piano when she liked, amusing herself in the garden or in the house undirected, uncontrolled by any one. Now, she was about to pass into a position where she would not be able to call her time her own, where she might follow her own desires in nothing. At Hanford, she had been surrounded with friends—the kind, good Sellwoods; Lady Brentwood; old Sir John; her affectionate but stupid aunt. Every one knew her there. Now, she was entering the society of total strangers. If she were about to associate with strangers of her own station, it would have been less disquieting; but she was plunging into a social stratum which was to her as strange as the persons composing it, who were about to become her daily companions.

It was already evening and dusk as she entered the private omnibus at the station; and she was tired with her journey by train, and with the strain on her mind through which she had passed. Through the square windows of the carriage she saw dimly the meadows, the high hedges, the trees, the cottages, where the lamps were being lighted. She heard the coachman and the boy salute and cast jokes at passing labourers. She saw and heard all, and without taking notice of anything. What she saw and heard mixed with what passed in her head, and formed a conglomerate of conflicting and new experiences and ideas, that left her bewildered and frightened. Presently, the coachman shouted and drew up; then, through the windows, Josephine saw a lodge, and a girl came out and threw apart the iron gates into a park. In another moment the carriage passed through,

and the wheels rolled over the smooth drive to the house. Josephine saw that the grounds were extensive, wide lawns over which white mist was settling, out of which rose grand clumps of beech and elm, and here and there a solitary cedar. Then the omnibus turned out of the main drive, and in another moment was rattling over the pavement of the court behind the house. The carriage stopped. The boy came to the door and opened it.

'Here you are, miss,' he said. 'Step up on the axle and help me down with your box; unless you'd like to get on the roof yourself and pass it down to me.'

'I am afraid I shall not be strong enough to support it. Cannot a groom or some other man help?'

'Oh, I don't know. I reckon if you want anything done here, you must do it yourself. Every one here is so frightfully engaged over his own work, and it is no one's place to help another.' However, the boy condescended to shout, and a footman came to the kitchen door. 'The young lady wants to be helped with her box,' said the boy; whereupon the footman came leisurely across the yard and took a good survey of Josephine, especially of her face.

'Come,' said he graciously, 'as you're so good-looking, I don't mind helping you. A little wanting in style, p'r'aps. I am Mr. Polkinghorn, and you are Miss—Miss——'

'Cable is my name,' answered Josephine curtly.

'No particular objection to alter it, I s'pose?' said the footman, who laughed at his joke. 'But it takes two to effect that—don't it, miss.' And he laughed again. 'You'll excuse my sportiveness, miss,' said he, taking the box on his shoulder as the boy let it down from the roof of the carriage; 'I'm generally considered a wit.'

When the box was on the ground, he dusted his shoulders and arms, and asked: 'And pray, what sort of people were you with last? Any style about 'em? People of rank and position and fortune?'

'This is my first place,' answered Josephine.

'You don't mean to say so! How on earth did our old woman come to take you, miss? Oh, I remember—you was recommended by the Sellwoods. I knew them—not exactly intimately, but off and on; they come here to stay with our party. You see, they are relatives; and the cap'n will inherit our little place after the old bird hops.'

'Hops?' repeated Josephine, not understanding him.

'Ay—kicks.'

'Kicks? I don't understand.'

Hops the twig, kicks the bucket. How dull you are! I fear your education has been neglected. I observe there is something countrified and gawky about you. Don't be uneasy; we'll put you to rights soon. Now, my dear, take this handle, and Charley shall hold the other, and we'll soon have the box into the kitchen. You'll excuse me lending a hand—a weight on the muscles of my arm makes them shake, and I have to be very particular that they are not unsteady. I have to carry the glass and plate, and the candles. I wouldn't spill the wax on the carpet not for worlds. So you know old Sellwood, do you? A worthy old chap. Pity he's a parson; he ought to be squire. I know his elder brother, and don't think much of him. There's not the true ring about him, that I like to find in the British aristocracy. The grand old English gentleman—you know the song. The young man will inherit this property, you know—it's a tidy estate. One can live on it without any of your dirty, sneaking, underhand pinching. Look here, pretty! Don't encourage no familiarities on the part of Mr. Vickary, the butler. He and I differ in politics. He's an out-and-out Radical, and it is asserted he has got a wife stowed away somewhere. You can always fall back on me, if he makes advances. My name is Mr. Polkinghorn. There is a village in the west of England that takes its name from our family. Cable is your name, is it? Rather clumsy work tying a true-lover's knot in a cable. You'll excuse my fun, dear; I'm always considered a wag.'

Josephine's face was dark with indignation and with heat, when she reached the kitchen. Mr. Polkinghorn had made her carry one side of the box, whilst he walked behind advising steadiness, as she and the stable-boy ascended the steps to the kitchen, carrying the box.

At the door, Mr. Polkinghorn gave Josephine an aside: 'Mind you give yourself no airs, miss. Airs ain't tolerated in our little place. It's the one thing we can't swallow. Airs are, so to speak, fatal.'

He stepped nimbly over the box into the middle of the kitchen, and addressed a portly woman there, wearing an apron, and a flaming red face: 'Mrs. Purvis, allow me to introduce Miss Cable to you—a young lady introduced to us by our mutual friends the Sellwoods. She solicits your kind

patronage. This, Miss Cable, is our artist, Mrs. Purvis;' aside, behind his hand, 'Cook.'

Then to a maid-servant: 'Miss Woods, permit me—Miss Cable, Miss Woods. Where is Miss Raffles? Oh, attending to duties upstairs; very well. Sorry not to be able to introduce you to Miss Raffles. She is drawing the blinds, I presume. But here is our sprightly Miss Wagstaff, a host in herself. Miss Wagstaff, Miss Cable; Miss Cable, Miss Wagstaff.' Then, aside, 'Scullery-maid.'

'What is the meaning of this?' asked Mrs. Purvis, without noticing Josephine. 'Is my kitchen a back hall, is it a lumber-room? What have you dared for to bring a box in here for, and—preserve us, a cage with a bird in it? Is this an aviary and zoological garden? Take 'em all away at once. Mr. Polkinghorn, Charley, what do you mean? Take 'em away instantly into the back hall. I'm not going to have my kitchen made into a rummage, not for any Cables or Tables or what you may call 'em.'

'It's the curry,' whispered Mr. Polkinghorn to Josephine. 'When there's anything for dinner requiring cayenne, or chilli, or anything spicy and hot—it gets into her temper. She'll be right enough when she's slept it off. Come along. I'll show you the way with the box into the back hall. Charley! help the lady. Miss Woods, is it asking too much of you that you should step up to Mrs. Grundy and inform her of the arrival of the lady recommended to us by the Sellwoods?' Then aside, 'Housekeeper, Grundy is.'

'Hulloa!' exclaimed the butler, stepping in, a man with white head, red blotched face, and yellow, watery eyes—a man with a sour and dogged look. 'Our new arrival. Humph! Had a long journey. You shall have a glass of cherry brandy with your supper.'

'He approves of you,' whispered Mr. Polkinghorn, 'or he would not have offered cherry brandy. Beware! He don't offer mistress's cherry brandy to everyone. Miss Raffles has never wetted her lips to it, I believe. Mr. Vickary doesn't like her. Her nose is badly shaped.'

Josephine was taken to the housekeeper's room. Mrs. Grundy gave orders for her box to be taken upstairs, and who was to do it? Without orders, no one did anything; and with orders, did extra work grumbling.

Josephine was shown her room by the second housemaid, Jane. She would not have a room to herself; she must share

that of Jane—that is, of Miss Raffles. The room was at the top of the house; it was lighted through a small window, concealed from sight without by a stone parapet. The window, therefore, looked upon a blank wall three feet off. Not a ray of sun could penetrate the room; all the light it received was reflected from this parapet, that was covered with mildew and lichen. In Queen Anne's time, mansions were erected with strict adherence to proportion; and if servants' rooms were needed, they were crowded into the roof and hidden from sight. The tall windows belonged to staterooms and the dwelling rooms of the gentry. Those who ministered to their wants were stowed away in out-of-the-way corners, lighted through passages, from staircases, by panes of glass let into the roof. Anything was good enough for them.

'You see,' said Miss Raffles, 'the window is nailed up. That's Mrs. Grundy's doings. The servants' windows all look out on the leads, the gutter that runs round the parapet, and they could get in and out and run round and pay each other visits just as they liked—and there was some goings-on, I can tell you. So Mrs. Grundy had the carpenter up, and he screwed up all the windows that they don't open any more. Lor' bless you, it don't matter so far as air goes; we are at the top of the house, and that ought to be the airiest.'

Josephine seated herself on her bed and leaned her head in her hand. This was the hardest trial of all—not to have a room to herself. If she could have been given the smallest garret chamber, in which she could at times be alone, it would have been endurable; but she felt that this was more than she could bear, to have no privacy day or night.

'I hope,' said Miss Raffles, 'you'll get on with our mistress. She ain't bad if you get the right side of her. But, mind you, keep on terms with Mr. Vickary, the butler; he well-nigh rules the mistress. She thinks him the most dutiful and faithful and excellent man. She takes his advice on everything; and if he don't like a servant, it ain't long that servant remains in the house. I don't think much of Mr. Vickary myself. They say he has two or three wives, and has them still stowed away in different parts of the country unbeknown to each other. Mr. Vickary is that deep in the mistress's confidence that she lets him manage her money matters for her—leastways, in household expenses. Hark! There's the bell ringing for us. Mrs. Grundy has a wire to the top of the house, and calls us, if we go up just

now and then to lie down and read a novel. She thinks now we've been too long; or perhaps the mistress wants to see you. We won't go down at once. Let them wait. You haven't unpacked your box yet, nor I seen what you have got. I say, have you a photograph of your young man? Drat it! there's the bell again. I suppose it is missus, so we must go down; or—I say—if you give me your key, I will unpack your box for you.'

Josephine went slowly downstairs without answering the loquacious Jane. Her heart sank within her. Would she be able to endure this association with chattering, empty-headed housemaids, conceited and pert footmen, and a tyrannous, unprincipled butler? Mrs. Grundy struck her as a formal, dull woman whose chief ambition was to stand well with her mistress and retain her place. If Mr. Vickary lorded it in the house Mrs. Grundy would shut one eye to his misdeeds.

Josephine had taken off her wedding ring when she left Hanford. She carried it hung round her neck by a small silk ribbon. It would not do for her to wear it. The sight of the ring would provoke questions which it would be difficult for her to answer.

The housekeeper was at the foot of the backstairs. 'Miss Otterbourne desires to see the new lady's-maid.—You have no need to wear a cap. A lady's maid is not required to have one. Follow me, Miss Cable.'

Mrs. Grundy led Josephine out through a side-door upon the main staircase. The backstairs were exceedingly tortuous and steep, so tortuous and steep that it was difficult to descend them quickly without a fall. The grand staircase occupied a well in the middle of the house; the flight was broad, the steps deep, the rise slight. The steps were carpeted with rich pile purple and crimson and maroon.

Miss Otterbourne sat in the great drawing-room, a lofty and very stately room, that at first glance reminded Josephine of the parlour at Brentwood. It had in the centre a glass chandelier, encased in yellow gauze, which looked like a gigantic silkworm's cocoon suspended from the ceiling. Large and handsome oil-paintings covered the walls. The furniture was gilt; curtains and chairs and sofa-covers were of crimson satin.

At the end of the room was a fireplace with a wood fire burning cheerfully in it, and near the fire, at a small table, on which was a lamp, sat a very little lady, with white hair done into

barrel-curls about her brow; dressed in slate-gray rich silk, and wearing a Barège handsome shawl over her shoulders.

'Grundy,' said Miss Otterbourne, 'may I trouble you to ring the bell for William? I want another log putting on the fire, and the pieces of half-burnt wood heaping together with the tongs.'

'Certainly, miss,' answered the housekeeper, and rang the bell.

'Oh,' said Miss Otterbourne, 'is this the young person recommended to me by my sister?' She put on her glasses and looked at Josephine. The room was so vast, the light from the lamp so slight, that she could not see much of Josephine. 'Oh—you look rather young and inexperienced. But of course my sister—that is, Mrs. Sellwood—knows. I rely on her. I hope you will conduct yourself satisfactorily.—Oh, William, another log, please. I believe there are some still in the wood-basket.—Mrs. Grundy, you will see that this young person has refreshment. She need not enter on her duties till to-morrow. She is probably tired with her journey from Hanford. I have never been to Hanford myself. I do not care to leave Bewdley, as the vibration of a railway upsets me. —Dear me! Grundy, will you touch the bell again? I want to tell William to make quite sure the fire is out before he goes to bed. I suppose, Grundy, the horses can hardly be taken out so as to give me a drive to-morrow? they have been to the station to-day for this young person.—That will do, Grundy. —I hope you will conduct yourself well, Cable. My servants are tried and trusty. You can always refer in all matters to Mrs. Grundy or to Mr. Vickary; they know my tastes and opinions.'

When the housekeeper left the room with Josephine, she signed to her to attend her in the little parlour which she occupied herself.

'You may sit here,' she said, graciously, 'for a while. I will talk to you, and you can listen. I will tell you what you have to do.—Miss Otterbourne is a very kind mistress, if you conduct yourself properly; that is, if you satisfy Mr. Vickary and me. Miss Otterbourne has the greatest regard for my opinion and for that of Mr. Vickary. Now, mind, you never complain to me of anything Mr. Vickary says or does; nor of anything that goes on in the kitchen, about broken meat or so on; nor about the dairy. The dairymaid manages that and it is no concern of yours. You are lady's-maid, and it is

no concern of yours what goes on outside your department. All that is my affair and Mr. Vickary's. Live and let live, say I. —Now, mind, you don't try to disturb the mistress's confidence in Mr. Vickary or me; for if you do, it will be so much the worse for you. You will very likely have to leave without a character.'

Josephine's head was sinking on her bosom; a feeling as if she had been struck on the head and stunned deprived her of the power of speech.

'A lady's-maid,' pursued Mrs. Grundy, 'has a place so near her mistress's ear that she can make herself very unpleasant, or the reverse, to her fellow-servants.—Now, please to remember that all will go pleasant if you don't say anything but good to the mistress about Mr. Vickary and me. If, however, you attempt any insinuating and countermining, it will be yourself as will suffer. You understand that?'

'May I have a post-card, Mrs. Grundy?'

'Certainly, if you have a ha'penny to pay for it. What do you want it for?'

'I promised to send a line to—to Mrs. Sellwood, when I reached this place.'

The housekeeper produced the card, and indicated ink and a pen.

Then Josephine took the pen, dipped it, wrote the address dreamily, turned the card, and on the other side inscribed these words only:

'Yes—winkles, cockles, oysters.—J. C.'

CHAPTER XLI.

SEVEN RED WINDOWS.

A CURIOUS sight it was to see Cable breaking stones on an early summer day, with his children about him, sitting on the heap, playing in the road, crouching into the hedge, and at noon clustering round him whilst he divided among them the cold potato-pasty that constituted the family dinner. But it was on Saturday only that this little conclave assembled, when there was no school. On all other days the elder children were learning their letters and the art of sewing in the

National School. The winter had passed hardly for Richard Cable, and for his mother, who had become infirm with age and trouble. She did not complain; but her face was paler and more sharp in feature, her movements were less rapid, her hair had become grayer. A tree ill bears transplantation, and Bessie had been uprooted from a comfortable home, from associations sad, painful, and yet cherished as associations, and carried away to a strange corner of Britain, where she was subjected to hardships to which she was unaccustomed. The work Richard got was not such as to bring in much pay, and it was not work for an able-bodied man. Sometimes he sat on the side of the road against the hedge and broke stones with a long hammer; at others he hobbled about the road scraping it and cleaning the water table. He got very wet over his work, and then rheumatism made itself felt in his weak thigh.

One consideration troubled Richard Cable night and day, and the trouble grew as the children oldened. How could the cottage be made to accommodate them all when they were grown up? How could his scanty earnings be made to sustain the whole family when the children were young women, and exacted more of him? Would he be constrained to send his daughters into service? The notion galled him. He racked his brains to discover what situations would be suitable for them, and how they could be guarded from harm when in them away from their grandmother's watchful eye and his protecting arm. He could not endure the thought of his darlings separated from himself and from one another, dispersed among farmhouses, surrounded by coarse associates, hearing loose talk, seeing unbecoming sights. He dreamed of his Mary or his Martha or Effie in such associations, and woke, flinging his arms about, crying out, leaping from his bed, to throttle those who thus offended his little ones.

As he sat breaking stones, sometimes the mica in the stones glittered in the sun; he wondered whether he should chance on a nugget of gold or a thread of silver, and so make his fortune. But such an idea, when it rose, embittered him the more. No; there was no chance of his finding gold thus; for that, he must go to California, and that he could not do, because he might not leave his helpless children. Silver! If he lit on a vein, what would it profit him? Others would enter in and quarry the precious metal; the mining captain, the men, the lord of the manor, the shareholders, would reap

the silver; not a coin minted out of it would come to his pocket who discovered the lode.

All at once Richard Cable left the parish church of St. Kerian and attended the Wesleyan meeting-house. What was his reason? It was no other than this. The rector had a large family, growing up; they sat in a pew near the beautiful old carved and gilt oak screen; and Cable could not endure to see them there on Sunday, and to listen to the voice of a pastor who was able to retain his eldest daughter, aged twenty-three, in the parsonage; also his second, aged twenty; and his third, aged eighteen. Why should the rector be thus privileged, and he himself be without the means of making a home for his children when they were grown up? The ways of Providence were not equal. He gave up going to chapel after a few months, because he was at war with Providence, after which the chapel was named. He beat the stones to pieces with a vindictive hate, as though he were breaking up the social order and reducing all men to one size and ruggedness. The farmer who was principal shareholder and mainstay of Providence Chapel had built himself a new house. Why should he be capable of adding three new rooms to his dwelling, and he, Dicky Cable, be unable to enlarge his cob cottage without encroaching on his garden?

Then his mind turned back to Hanford. He thought of the Hall that might have been his, had Gabriel Gotham behaved rightly to his mother. He knew that house well now, and he took a grim pleasure in considering how he would have disposed of the rooms for the accommodation of his dears. The little Rose Room, that would have done for the twins; and Mary, sweet Mary, should have had the Blue Room looking out on the terrace, with the window over the door. The Yellow Room would have gone to his mother and baby Bessie. Lettice and Susie could have revelled in the Lavender Room, so called because it always smelt of lavender. How happy the children would have been there! How sweet would have been the sound of their voices as they played among the bushes of laburnum and syringa! The idea was enticing; but Richard never for a moment regretted having refused the offer made him.

His brief life in the Hall had left an indelible mark on him other than that which has been mentioned. In spite of himself, he had been forced to contrast the habits of the cultured with those of the class to which he belonged; and his clear

good sense showed him that there were vulgarities and roughnesses that might be sloughed away with advantage; that there were merits as well as demerits in civilisation. Involuntarily, his mind was caught by these points, and hung on them, and he began to correct in himself little uncouthnesses, and to insist on attention to these matters in his children. In Bessie Cable there had ever been a refinement and grace of manner above her position, due to her early association with Gabriel and the rest of the Gotham family; but Richard had not regarded this or sought to acquire it. Now he appreciated it, and was painfully anxious that his children should acquire it. Indeed, with them there was no difficulty; they had instinctive delicacy and refinement. They had the look of little ladies, with their transparent skins, fine bones, and graceful shapes.

'You're swelling out of your clothes,' said Farmer Tregurtha one day as he came on Richard sitting on the bench at his cottage door, looking at his children.

'What do you mean?' asked Cable.

'So proud,' answered Tregurtha, laughing—'proud wi' contemplating them seven little mites.'

'And I've a cause,' said Richard, holding up his head.

He could not get over his difficulty about housing the little girls as they grew older. He could not raise the roof and add a story, as the clay walls would not bear the superstructure; and to add to the cottage laterally was to rob his garden.

One night, after Cable had been fuming in mind over this trouble all day, he had a remarkable dream. From his bedroom he could look through a tiny window away to a green sloping hillside, which had its head clothed with dense oak coppice. He had often looked out at this hill and thought nothing of the prospect. This night, however, he dreamed that, as he lay in bed, he was gazing through the window, and although it was night, he saw the whole of that slope and the wood, and the granite tors and the moor clothed in heather and gorse behind it, bathed in glorious sunlight. But what was new and remarkable in the landscape was that on the slope, where now lay a grass field, standing with its back to the coppice stood Hanford Hall. There was no mistaking the house, with its white walls, and windows painted Indian-red, and the great door opening on to the terrace. There it stood, with its flight of stone steps down the slope

in three stages. Moreover, he saw himself standing in the doorway, and one of his children's heads peeping out of each window. There was Mary looking from the Blue Room, and Effie from the Rose Room, and Susan from the Lavender Room, and Martha from the Yellow Room. Only he could not make out whether little Bessie were there, and from which window her dear innocent little face, with its look of pain ever on it, was visible. The house had an air of comfort about it, and a freshness, such as Hanford Hall lacked. It had lawn and flower-garden before it, and gravelled walks; and a summer-house where at Hanford stood the windstrew, a summer-house with a conical roof and a gilt ball at the top. This was the only completely novel feature in the scene. He knew the St. Kerian landscape. He knew the front of the house at Hanford, and of course his children's faces were familiar to him. Why, then, was a perfectly new feature introduced, and how was it that such a jumble of disconnected objects and scenery should occur to him?

When Richard awoke, the dream had made such an impression on his mind that he was unable to shake it off. Only one point puzzled him—the arrangement of the windows. How were they set in front of the house so that there should be seven windows? If he had two on the right, and two above, also two on the left and two above, and one over the door, that would make nine. If he had four on one side and two on the other, and one above the door, that indeed would be seven; but the house would be lopsided. He tried to recall how the windows were at Hanford, and was unable to recollect. All day he puzzled over the problem. As he went through the village, he met the mason.

'Mr. Spry,' said he, 'how could I build a house on Summerleaze with seven red windows in the front and a door?'

'Summerleaze!' exclaimed the mason. 'Why, sure, that belongs to Farmer Tregurtha. You're surely not a-going to build there?'

'Never mind about that,' said Cable hastily. 'All I ask is, how can I have seven red windows in the front of a house with a door to go in at?'

'You about to build!' exclaimed Spry. 'Wonders will never cease! Where is the money to come from? Show me that, and I'll consider the question how to build with it.'

'I want to know how there could be seven red windows in

the front of a house as well as a door, and the front of the house not look crooked and queer.'

'What be the good of puzzling over that, when the land ain't yourn, nor the money itself wherewith to build?' Then he pushed on his way, and left Cable unanswered.

That same day Cable was seated by the roadside. He had broken his pasty into eight pieces; but little Lettice had cried for more, and he had given her his portion, contenting himself with the crumbs. He was hungry and irritable, teased with his dream, and angry at the mason for the contemptuous way in which he had left him with his problem unsolved. All at once he heard a voice above him, and looking up, saw Farmer Tregurtha standing in his field behind the hedge, gazing down on him and on the little shining heads on which the sun was blazing.

'Hulloh! Dick,' shouted the farmer, 'what is the meaning of this I hear? Spry has been talking all over the village that you are about to buy my land of me, whether I want to sell or no. I did not know you were flush of money and wished to extend your acres!' Tregurtha had dined; he was in a jovial mood. Cable was empty, and an empty stomach makes a bitter soul.

'I'll telly' what,' said the farmer; 'your little ones will come to a workhouse sooner than to a mansion on Summerleaze.'

Then Cable began to tremble. With difficulty he rose to his feet, and looked hard at the face of Tregurtha—a red, good-natured, rough face. He looked beyond, and saw the green meadow that reached up to the oak coppice, and beyond the coppice rose the heathy moor to the granite tors. Then his eyes fell, and he saw his seven little girls looking up at him, wondering, not understanding what was going on—six pair of blue eyes, only those of Bessie brown like her mother's. Spots of red came on his temple, and sparks danced in his eyes.

With an effort, he controlled himself, and reseated himself at the stone-heap. He was trembling. He was in no mood now to speak with his children. 'Run home,' he said to them. 'Mary, take them away; I must return to my work.'

Then Mary held out her hand to Bessie, who could just toddle, and Effie held Bessie by the other hand. Martha took the hand of Effie that was disengaged, and Lettice the free hand of Martha, and Jane that of Susie; and so the seven little creatures walked away, casting seven little shadows

on the white road; and Richard Cable looked after them, and when they had turned a corner, covered his face and wept like a woman. When he came home in the evening, he was whistling a tune, to let the little ones suppose that he was in good spirits. He turned out a caldron of boiled turnips and Essex dough-nuts into seven little soup-plates, and seven little stools were set at the table. Cable sat by the fire with his dish on his knees and a spoon in his hand, eating a mouthful, and then watching the children; but all the while his mind was on the house with seven red windows.

When they had finished their supper, Mrs. Cable undressed and washed the children; and Richard took them one after the other on his knee and combed their hair and kissed their cherry lips, and made them all kneel together round him and fold their hands and close their eyes and say 'Our Father.' But his heart was not with them when they prayed; it was sealed. When they had finished 'Amen,' he carried each in his arms, clinging to his neck, and put them one by one to bed. Little Bessie would not go to sleep that night unless he sat by her and let her hold his hand. He submitted, and watched the closing eyes of the child.

When all the seven were breathing softly in sleep, Cable mended some shoes and knitted some stockings, and carpentered at a broken stool. Then he went up to his bedroom. The moon was shining through the window. He opened it, and leaning on the sill, looked out. The moon floated like a silver bowl on the indigo-blue heaven sea. Here was the very bowl in which St. Kerian had rowed to the earthly Paradise; there, dusky, in it was discernible the form of the rowing saint. Below, lay the village, bathed in pearly light. The granite church tower with its pinnacles turned outwards, glittered against the bank of black yews between it and the parsonage. The only other light was that from the forge, red, palpitating. Why was the smith working so late? Ah! he could earn money, a good deal of money, by hammering and turning his iron after usual hours, but much was not to be got out of breaking stones for the road.

Richard Cable wiped the perspiration from his brow. A great struggle was going on in his breast. There was money, abundance of money to be had for the asking, money that, he was told, was now lying idle and accumulating. Should he put out his hand and accept some of it? He would not be obliged to communicate with Josephine, only with the Han-

ford lawyer. What was before him if he remained at St. Kerian? Only privations and cares, the parting with his children. His soul was full of sores; and this day a rough hand had brushed over the quivering nerves, and brought the sweat of agony to his brow, and the tears of humiliation over his cheeks. But for all that, he could not resolve to touch the money offered him. It would be a condoning of the wrongs offered by Gabriel Gotham to his mother, and of those offered him by Josephine.

'It must be somehow, but not that way,' he said. 'I will have the house, like Hanford Hall, of my own building, with the seven red windows, as in my dream. I will think of nothing now but how I may come at it'

CHAPTER XLII.

A GOLDEN PLUM.

Nothing is more simple. Fortune sits on a cloud and lets down golden plums suspended by a hair into this nether world of ours. Those of us who are wide awake and on the look-out for plums, the moment we see the golden drop descend, dash past our neighbours, kick their shins to make them step aside, tread them down if they obstruct our course, jostle them apart, and before they have pulled their hands out of their pockets and rubbed their eyes or their bruised shins, and have asked all round, Where is the plum? we have it in our mouths, have sucked it, and spit the stone out at their feet.

No sooner is one golden plum snatched and carried off, than Fortune, with a good-humoured smile, attaches another to her thread, and lets it down through the clear air into our midst. What a busy, swarming world ours is, and all the millions that run about are looking for the plums in the wrong places. It is said that the safest place in a thunder-storm is the spot where lightning has already fallen, because it is ten thousand chances to one against the electric bolt descending in the same place again. With Fortune's plums we may be sure that the unlikeliest corner in which to come across one is that where a plum has already been let down. No man when he fishes whips the stream precisely where he whipped last. But this is what few consider. The moment one of us has caught and bolted a plum, there is a rush to

the spot, and even a scramble for the stone we have thrown away—and see! all the while behind the backs of the scramblers a golden fruit is dangling, and Fortune shakes her sides with laughter to observe the swarm tossing and heading at the sucked stone, whilst a single knowing one quietly comes up and takes her newly offered plum. The eyes of all the rest are turned in the opposite direction till the opportunity is lost.

In this chapter I am going to relate how Richard Cable caught sight of and got hold of one of Fortune's golden plums; not, indeed, a very large one, but one large enough to satisfy his requirements. It came about in the simplest way, and it came about also in the way least expected.

'Hullooh!'

Whilst Cable was breaking stones on the roadside, Jacob Corye stood before him. He had not seen the host of the 'Magpie' since he had left his roof, nearly a year ago. Since his departure, Richard had occasionally spoken to his mother about Corye, and had told her that the sufferings he had undergone from the weariful talk of the landlord had almost equalled those he endured from his injured thigh. Now that he heard the saw-like voice of Jacob, he looked up and answered ungraciously. He was ill-pleased to renew acquaintance with the man, and be subjected again to his tedious prosing about the rearing and raising and fattening of young stock. Yet that moment was a critical one; on it hung Richard's fortune. Jacob himself had caught a glimpse of the golden plum, and with rare generosity, or rather with by no means singular stupidity, was about to put it into Richard Cable's mouth, and Richard was like a child offered a rare fruit, that bites cautiously, and turns the piece about in the mouth, considering its flavour, and then, at once, having satisfied itself that the quality is excellent, takes the plum at a gulp.

'Hullooh!' said Jacob Corye, standing before Richard, with his hands in his pockets and his legs wide apart, with a pipe in his mouth, and speaking with difficulty and indistinctly because of the pipe, which he was too lazy to remove. 'How be you a-getting on in the world, eh? I needn't ask that, cap'n, when I seez you come down to stone-knacking for a living.'

'If you see that, why do you ask?' inquired Cable irritably.

Jacob continued, imperturbably: 'I reckon you're a bit disappointed with your house. The garden ain't much for the raising and fattening of seven little maids.'

Richard did not answer. He frowned and continued hammering.

'I reckon you're pretty well on wi' the stone-breaking,' said Corye. 'What'll you be on to next?'

'Whatever turns up,' replied Cable curtly.

'That's just it,' the host of the 'Magpie' said; 'and I've come here to look you up and make you an offer. I've been a-troubling and a-worriting my head ever since I came to think at all, about the rearing and the raising of young stock, and how to get rid of the regraders' profits. I don't mean to get rid of 'em either; I mean to get the profits for myself and do without the regraders. Well, cap'n, I've figured it out on a bit o' paper. I couldn't get my ideas into order no other way. Doy' look here. There's manganese in St. Kerian, ain't there?'

'Yes,' answered Cable. 'You can see that for yourself.'

'So I have. I seed the washing-floors, and the water running red as riddam [ferruginous water] away from them. There be three or four washing-floors, ain't there?'

'Yes. You can count them if you are curious; I am not.'

'Oh, I've nothing to do wi' manganese,' continued Jacob, 'more than this—that my meaning is, just as the manganese has to be washed in this tank, and then in thicky [that one], and every time it is washed you get rid of the rummage and get more o' the metal, so is it with ideas. I've got an idea or two in my head, and I've been a-stirring and a-scouring of it over and over for years; but I can't get rid o' the rummage; there must be another floor on which to give it a second wash before we get at the pure metal. So my meaning is, I want you to take into consideration what I've a-said about the raising and rearing and fattening of young stock, and give it a second wash in your brain; and then, I reckon, something'll come of it. It be them darned regraders as has to be got rid of—washed out of the cattle, so to speak.'

'Go on,' said Richard. He knew his man—that there would be no getting rid of him till he had talked himself out.

'Doy' look here,' continued Jacob, leisurely taking one hand out of his pocket, tapping the ashes from his pipe, replacing his pipe between his lips, in the corner of his mouth, and then his hand in his pocket. 'When one of the quarriers or masons goes on to the tors after granite, it ain't every piece as

will serve his purpose. He may spend a day over what seems a fitty [fitting] piece; and then may discover, when he's half cut it, that it's beddy [liable to split], or so full of horseteeth [spar] that he can make nothing out of it, and all his labour is thrown away. Now, I want you to lay hold of my idea, and turn it out with a crowbar from where it lies in the bog—that is, my head—and split it up and see whether it is beddy or horsetoothy, or whether there's good stuff in it for use. I can't do it myself; I've not had the education. I can show you a score of ideas bogged in my brains; but I can't tell you whether they're workable and shapeable. Now, I ax you to do that; and I'll send you a kilderkin of "Magpie" ale for your trouble, if you can find what is usable in my ideas; and, for a beginning, the rearing, and the raising and the fattening of young cattle.'

'I should have supposed that was the only idea in the bog you call your intellect.'

'There, you're wrong,' said Corye, by no means affronted. 'It is the most remarkable and conspicuous idea, that's all. My mind is like Carnvean Moor. If you go over it, you see the Long Man, a great old ancient stone about twenty feet high, standing upright, that they tell was an idol in the times of the Romans [that is, Roman Catholics]. When you go over the moor, you can see nought but the Long Man; but blow you! doy' suppose there be no more granite there than thicky great stone? If it were took away, you'd find scores on scores of pieces lying about, more than half covered wi' peat and furze and heather.'

'Go on, then, with your Long Man.'

'I'm a-going along as quick as I can; but I can't go faster. I've the pipe in my mouth.'

Jacob smoked leisurely for some minutes, contemplating Cable, who worked on without regarding him.

'It's all very well saying "Go on," when one has an idea, but it ain't possible. If I hadn't an idea I could gallop. It is just the same with the miller's donkey; when the boys get a sack of flour over the donkey's back, the donkey goes at a walk and cautiously. What doy' mean by hollering "Go on!" to him then? He can't gallop his donkey, because of the sack o' flour across it. So is it with me. I must go along quietly and cautiously, at a footpace, because I've got this idea over the back of my intellect; if there were none there, I'd go on at a gallop.'

'Then go on at your own pace,' said Cable, 'and don't zig-zag.'

Richard sat breaking the stones and listening at first inattentively to the prosing of the host of the 'Magpie;' but little by little his interest was aroused, and when it was, then he forgot his work. The breaking of the stones became less vigorous, till at last Richard sat looking dreamily before him with the haft of the hammer in his hands and the head resting on a stone. He no more rose the hammer over the stones that day, but hobbled home in a brown study. The thoughts of Jacob Corye, when washed on the floor of his brain, proved to be sterling metal; or, to take another of the landlord's similes, the Long Man of his boggy mind when chipped by Cable's tool proved to be sound stone.

I need not give my readers the turbid talk of Jacob for them to wash, but will let them have the scheme of the innkeeper after it had been sifted and arranged by Cable.

St. Kerian lies eleven miles from Launceston, which is its nearest town. Thither the farmers have to drive their bullocks and sheep for sale. It is even worse for those near the coast; they have to send them some fifteen or twenty miles. At Launceston market the cattle are sold to jobbers, who drive them along the great highroad called Old Street—ancient, no doubt, in Roman times—to Exeter, a distance of thirty-eight or forty miles, where they are resold to dealers from Somersetshire, Gloucestershire, and even Berkshire. Of late years the South-Western line has run to Plymouth by Exeter and Okehampton, so that cattle have been trucked at Lydford, Bridestowe, or Okehampton. Quite recently, in 1886, the South-Western has carried a line into Launceston; but at the time of which I write, the line had not come nearer than Exeter, thirty-eight miles from Launceston, and fifty from St. Kerian, and some sixty from the coast.

Now, Jacob Corye had picked up scraps of information from the coastguard, some of whom came from Gloucestershire and Somersetshire. From them he learned that the farming done there was dairy-farming. Butter and cheese were made and sold at Bath, Bristol, and in London. The land was good, the pastures rich; no stock was raised there—it did not pay to raise stock, or it did not pay so well as dairy-farming. Along the north coast of Cornwall the land was poor, and exposed to the western sea-gales. Only in the bottoms of the valleys was good pasture and rich alluvial soil. There

was a great deal of white clay about, lying in bars from east to west on the hillsides, sometimes filling the valley bottoms; and where that was, nothing would grow but scant grass and rushes, and sheep put on it were certain to rot. This land did well enough for young stock, and was worth from five to ten shillings an acre; but it was fit for nothing else. Corye considered that when the farmers sold their cattle at Launceston, the jobbers who drove them to Okehampton or to Exeter and resold them made a tidy profit; so did the dealers who bought them at Okehampton or Exeter and trucked them on into Somerset, or Gloucester, or Berks. There were at least two profits made out of the bullocks and heifers before they reached their ultimate destination.

Then, again, the dairy-farmers, after that their cows had calved, wanted to get rid of the calves; it did not pay them to rear them on their dairy-land. On the other hand, the North Cornish farmers could not get calves enough to rear on their poor land. When it came to fattening the young stock, they could not do it; they had not good pasturage for that; therefore, they were forced to sell, and sell cheap. In precisely the same manner, the farmers in the dairy counties sold their calves cheap. The bullocks they did not want at all, and the heifers they wanted after they were grown into cows, but not before. So sometimes calves from Somerset travelled down into Cornwall, and travelled back again, after a lapse of a couple of years, into Somerset; and as they went down, they passed through two or three dealers' hands, leaving coin in their several palms; and as they went up, they passed through the same hands, and again left coin in their several palms.

Now Corye saw this confusedly. He had tried his utmost to clear the matter by using a stump of a pencil and a bit of paper, but had only succeeded in further bewildering himself. Cable saw his way at once. There flashed on his eyes the gold of the plum, and he put out his hand for it. He did not take long to consider. He at once offered Corye to drive his stock to Exeter, to truck them there, and go up country with them, and dispose of them in Somersetshire or Gloucestershire. By this means he would save the profits of at least two intermediaries. He proposed that one of these profits should go to Corye, the other to himself. Jacob Corye was to provide him with a cob on which to ride, and was to advance him a small sum sufficient for the main-

tenance of his children during his absence. Whatever Corye advanced to him, he was to deduct from Cable's share of the profits on his return. The scheme was so simple and practicable that the host of the 'Magpie' closed with the offer at once. It was a relief to him to find that his ideas were being put into practical shape. This pleased him more than the prospect of making money.

'You see,' said he, shaking hands again and again with Cable, 'I've ideas, but they're bogged.'

'Do more,' said Richard, 'than send your own stock; buy of your neighbours, that I may have a large drove. The larger the drove, so long as it is manageable, the more the money that will come in.'

'Doy' look here,' said Jacob. 'I'm a liberal man wi' them as deals liberal wi' me. I'll keep all your little maids on "Magpie" ale as long as you're away, and no charge. I said a kilderkin, I say two.'

'Thank you,' answered Richard. 'The little girls drink only water and milk.'

Cable finished the work he had to do for the waywardens on the road; he said nothing to anyone in St. Kerian, except his mother, about his projected journey; but he went over to the 'Magpie' once before starting, to concert plans, and see a coastguardman who came out of Somersetshire, and who, Corye thought, might be of use to him. The man was anxious to send a message home, and with the message some Cornish crystals set in bog oak as a brooch for his sister, who kept an inn near Bath; also some specimens of peacock copper, and spar with tin ore in it, and mundic. These samples of the riches of Cornwall would interest the Somersetshire folk of his native village of Bewdley. Cable took the names of some of the farmers about the place, and promised to lodge at the inn and give the specimens and the brooch.

'My sister,' said the coastguardman, 'has a lot o' little childer.'

'Very well,' said Richard. 'I'm certain to put up with her. What is her inn?'

'The "Otterbourne Arms." It belongs to an old lady who is squiress of the place, called Otterbourne.'

Richard received his instructions from Jacob; they were confused and unintelligible. He almost offended him and brought the agreement to a condition of rupture by declining 'Magpie' beer.

'I've a notion of taking the pledge,' he said.

'More's the reason you should drink now, afore you does,' argued Corye.

The night before his departure, Richard Cable could not sleep. He saw that the golden plum was let down within his reach, and he had his hand on it. There remained to him only to bite into the rich fruit. But in this case, as in all other in this world, every good thing brings with it something bad—there is no gain without loss. If he were about to rise from want to plenty, he must consent to be much parted from his children. What this meant to him, few can understand. We all have our interests, our friends, our studies, and although we love our children, they do not engross our whole thoughts, occupy our hearts to the exclusion of everything else. With Richard Cable it was otherwise. He had no friends, no acquaintances, no pursuits, no interests apart from his children. He lived for nothing else, he thought of nothing else. He worked for nothing else; he loved nothing else, except his mother. The wrench to him was almost unendurable. He had given up the thought of going to sea after his accident, because he could not bear to be parted from them; and now he only left them because he had resolved to make his dream come true, and in no other way that he could see was that dream to be realised.

Richard kept a little lamp alight all the night before he left home, because he left his bed every hour to look at one after another of the seven little sleeping heads, and to wonder which he could best spare, should it please that sullen Providence, which so ill-used him, to take one away whilst he was absent. He found that he could not part with dearest Mary, so thoughtful and forbearing with others, so full of love and kindness to the youngest ones—so like a little mother to them, though she was only fourteen years old; nor with Effie, so sprightly, with her twinkling eyes, and that dimple in her ever-laughing cheek; nor with Jane, who clung to Effie, being her twin-sister, and who must go if Effie went; nor with Martha, who had such endearing, coaxing ways; nor with Lettice, with a voice like a lark, so shrill, yet withal so clear and sweet; nor with Susie the pickle, who already knew her letters, and could say BA—Ba, and one and two makes three; no—she said BA spells sheep, and one and two makes four; no, not with Bessie the baby, Bessie, whom after all it would be best that God should take.—No, no, no—ten thousand times no!

CHAPTER XLIII.

A LOW LOT.

When the morning broke, Richard Cable did not dare to kiss the white brows or the rosy cheeks of his sleeping children; but he took little locks of their shining hair between his fingers and put his lips to them, and dropped over each alike a clear tear-drop, and then went away before the seven pairs of bright eyes opened, and the little voices began to chirp and laugh and chatter.

Richard Cable drove his herd of young cattle all the way from St. Kerian to Exeter, some fifty miles. There he trucked them on the Bristol and Exeter line, and travelled with them into Somersetshire, where he disposed of them to such advantage that he was well content. But he would not return with only money in his pocket. He had a van constructed, very light, on four wheels, for his cob, and he bought as many calves, a week or ten days old, as he could convey in this van.

He made Bewdley his headquarters, and stayed at the 'Otterbourne Arms,' where was the landlady, Mrs. Stokes, the sister of the coastguardman at Pentargon. To her he remitted the spar, and the mundic, and the brooch of bog-oak with Cornish crystals in it. She was a tidy, red-cheeked woman, with many children.

Cable was a temperate man. He remembered that terrible night when he let little Bessie fall. He never got that experience out of his mind; consequently, he was on his guard against the temptations of a cattle-jobber's life—the sealing of every bargain with a drink. So he drank cold toast-and-water when he could, but he had taken no pledge. 'What's the good of a pledge to me?' he asked himself. 'I've only to think of Bessie's back, and if I had the best spirits in the world before me, I would not touch it.'

'Have you any relatives this way?' asked Mrs. Stokes one Saturday evening. 'There's a young woman of your name at the Hall, a lady's-maid to Miss Otterbourne.'

'I have no relatives,' answered Richard, 'but the seven and my mother who are under my roof at St. Kerian, in Cornwall.'

'Tis a curious and outlandish sort of a name too,' said Mrs. Stokes. 'I mean, it ain't a name one expects to come across twice in a lifetime.'

Richard shrugged his shoulders.

'Here comes Mr. Polkinghorn the footman,' said the landlady. 'He does come here at times to see if there be any one to have a talk with. He can tell you all about your namesake.'

'I am not interested about her,' answered Richard. 'I have none that belong to me save the seven and my mother, and they—I know where they are, under my own roof.'

'Good-evening, Mr. Polkinghorn; how do you find yourself?—And how is Miss Otterbourne?'

'We are both of us pretty well. She's been suffering a little from nettlerash, that has made her fractious, and she has rung the bell outrageous; but she's better now, and I'm middling, thank you. Worreted with her nettlerash and the constant ringing of the bell caused by the irritation. First, it was the blinds were not drawn to her fancy; then it was she wanted a lump of coal with the wood in the grate; and then the venetian blinds must come down, or be turned, or pulled up; and then the geranium or pelargonium on the table—I'm blessed, Mrs. Stokes, if I know what is the difference between a geranium and a pelargonium—wanted water; or she desired another book from the library. It really is wonderful, Mrs. Stokes– I'll have a glass of beer, thank you —how a little matter upsets a whole household. It comes of lobster mayonaise or cucumber, one or t'other, which don't agree with the old woman. If she takes either of them, and she's roaring fond of them, she gets eruptions, generally nettlerash; and when she's got eruptions, it disturbs us all, keeps the whole household capering: one has to go for the doctor, another has to get cooling fomentations, and her temper is that awful, it is a wonder we stand it. But we know her, and put it down to disorder of the system. We must bear and forbear; must we not, Mrs. Stokes? so we pass over all the aggravations, as good Christians and philanthropists.'

'You've not been introduced,' said the hostess. 'You don't know this gentleman, Mr. Cable of Cornwall.'

'Cornwall!' exclaimed the footman. 'You don't happen to have come across the manor and mansion of Polkinghorn anywhere thereabouts, do you? Our family come from the

West of England, and have a lordship called after us; but I don't exactly know where it is. Still, it's traditional in the family that there is one. We've come down in life; but so have many great folks; and lord! sir—what are our British aristocracy now? Mushrooms, sir, creatures of to-day. Bankers and brewers and civil engineers, who were not even known, who had not lifted their heads out of the dust, when the Polkinghorns were lords of manors and drove their coach-and-four.'

Mrs. Stokes produced the ale.

'I'll take a mouthful of bread and cheese with it,' said the footman, who was not now in livery.—'So you, sir, are called Cable. We've a Cable among us.'

'Do you mean among the Polkinghorns?'

'Polkinghorns, sir!' said the footman, bridling up. 'I do not, sir, think such a name as Cable has found its way among us, into our tree, sir. I alluded to an inmate of the Hall, sir, a lady's-maid there, who is a Rope or a Cable, or something of that sort—possibly, as she is not stout, merely a twine.' Then as he finished his glass of ale: 'Excuse my freedom, sir; I am generally accounted a wit. I once sent a trifle to *Punch*.'

'Was it inserted?'

'I sent it, sir; that suffices. I do not myself suppose that our Cable does belong to you. There is a lack of style—a want of finish—you understand me, which proclaims inferiority. Not bad-looking, either, is Miss Josephine.'

'What!' shouted Cable, springing to his feet and striking the table. 'What did you say!'

Mr. Polkinghorn stared at him and backed his chair from the table. He did not like the expression on the stranger's face; he thought the man might be a lunatic; therefore, with great presence of mind, he drew the cheese-knife from his plate and secreted it in the pocket of his short coat.

'I asked you a question,' cried Richard. 'What did you say?'

'Merely, dear sir, merely that—that we have a lady's-maid attending on our old woman who is good-looking, but wanting in what I should consider—breeding. If she be a relative, I am sorry——'

'What is her name?'

'Josephine Cable.'

'How long has she been with you?'

'Since last September. She was well recommended: she brought excellent testimonials. Her character quite irreproachable—from some good friends of ours, the Sellwoods of Essex, a respectable family, unfortunate in having gone into the Church. I should have preferred the Army for them.'

'Why is she——' Cable stopped; he was trembling. He put his hand to the table to steady himself. 'I mean—who is she?'

'I do not know,' answered Mr. Polkinghorn. 'She is uncommunicative; that is what I mean when I say she has not the breed of a lady. She ain't at her ease and familiar with us. She is reserved, as she might call it; awkward, as I should say. If we ask her questions, she don't answer. She's maybe frightened at finding herself in such high society; and I'm not surprised. I don't fancy she was in other than a third-class situation before—with some people in business or profession—not real aristocrats. That does make a person feel out of her element when she rises to our walk of life. It is just the same as if you were to invite a common sailor to a dinner-party among millionaires and aristocrats—how would he feel? He'd look this way and that and be without power of speech. He wouldn't know where to put his feet and how to behave himself. It is much the same with Miss Cable. She's not been brought up to our line of life, and don't understand it, and is as miserable among us as a common sailor would be among gentlemen and ladies.'

'Did you say *Miss* Cable?'

'To be sure I did. I don't suppose she's a married woman. She wears no gold wedding ring.'

'And her Christian name is——?'

'Josephine. But then we always call her Miss Cable, and our old woman calls her Cable.'

'She has never said a word to you of her family?'

'Not a word. Better not, I suspect. I don't fancy there's anything very high about it. Judging by her manners, I should say she was—excuse my saying it—a low lot.'

'Nor whence she comes?'

'Mum as a mummy—excuse the joke. I am said to be witty. Humour runs in the Polkinghorn blood.'

'Nor what brought her to take service?'

'Necessity—of course. No lady would so demean herself unless forced.—Will you take a glass of ale with me?'

'With pleasure,' answered Cable; 'and I'll ask you not to

mention my name at your place—not to the young lady you speak of.'

'I understand,' said Mr. Polkinghorn with a wink and a tap of his nose with his finger. 'Poor relations are nuisances; they come a-sucking and a-sponging, and are a drag on a man who is making his way. No, sir, I'll not say a word.—May I ask if she *is* a relative?'

'I have not seen her. I cannot say.'

'Does the name Josephine run in the family, as John Thomas does in that of Polkinghorn?'

'We never had one baptised by that name.'

'I myself,' said the footman, 'intend to marry some day, so as to perpetuate John Thomas. I'm not sure that I may not take Miss Raffles. I won't deny that I had a tenderness towards the Cable at first; she is good looking, has fine eyes, splendid hair; a brunette, you understand, with olive skin, and such a figure! But I could not stand the want of polish and ease which go with the true lady, and that she will never get among us.'

Richard left the room abruptly. He was greatly moved, partly with surprise at finding Josephine in such a position, partly with anger at the insolence of the footman.

This latter looked after him contemptuously. 'Well, Mrs. Stokes,' he said, 'I've only come on two Cables in the course of my experience, and, dash me, if there be not a twist in them both.'

Richard went forth, and did not return to the inn till late. He walked by the river. He was disturbed in mind. Mr. Sellwood had told him nothing of Josephine's plan of going into service; he had not felt himself authorised to do this; and at the time he saw Cable, he doubted whether Josephine's resolution might not be overcome. All that Cable knew was that she had surrendered the estate and left the Hall. She was proud, and would have nothing to do with a property that came to her, as she concluded, unjustly; and he was proud, he would accept no property that was offered to him by her. But that she had been so reduced in circumstances by this voluntary surrender as to oblige her to earn her bread by menial work, seemed to him impossible. Her father was a man of some fortune. It was not possible that he would consent to her leaving him for such a purpose. Yet, how else could he account for Josephine's being at Bewdley Manor in the capacity represented?

There was a mistake. This could not be she. Some one else was in the house who had assumed her name. He could not be satisfied till he had seen her. But he would not allow himself to be seen by her. He hobbled along the river-path leaning on his stick, racking his brain over the questions that arose, seeking solutions which always escaped him. To whom at Hanford could he apply for information concerning the affairs and movements of his wife? There was no one but Mr. Sellwood, and to him he would not write. His brother-in-law, Jonas Flinders, was dead, and he shrank from corresponding on the subject with any of his old mates.

Then he suddenly burst into a bitter laugh. Was this his Josephine, this servant-girl, whom the vulgar flunky, and with him her fellow-servants, despised as not up to their level, wanting in style—a low lot? Josephine, who had scorned his lack of breeding, was herself looked down on by the ignoble tribe of pariahs on civilisation! It was a just judgment on her. How she must toss and writhe, what agonies of rage and humiliation she must endure in such association! 'A low lot!' shouted Cable, slashing at the bulrush-heads on the bank, and laughed savagely—'a low lot!' But then a gentler feeling came over him, a wave of his old kindliness and pity, so long suppressed or beaten back. He saw his haughty, splendid, wilful Josephine surrounded by these common-minded, swaggering, vain, unintelligent, and debased creatures—alone, cold, stern, eating out her heart rather than show her disgust and shame. If it had been misery to him to be transferred to a condition of life above him to which he was unfitted, it must be misery to her to be flung down into a sphere to her infinitely distasteful and repellent. He was a man, who could hold his own, or retire with dignity. She was a girl, helpless. His heart began to flutter, and he turned his steps into the path by a wicket gate. The evening was still, the sky clear. The great trees stood against the silver-gray sky as blots. The dew was falling heavily; the grass was charged with water. He might as well have been wading in a stream as walking through it. So heavily was the dew falling that the leaves of the trees were laden with the moisture, and bowed under the weight, and dripped as with rain. The glowworms shone in the damp banks and among the grass under the tree trunks. The stars were twinkling in the sky, looking golden in contrast with the bluish light of the glowworms; an auroral haze hung over the set sun, fringed

with a faint tinge of ruddy brown before it died into the deep gray blue of the night-sky.

He drew near to the house, and a watchdog in the back court began to bark. It had heard his steps on the gravel of the drive. Richard stepped off the carriage-way upon the turf and remained still. The dog hearing no further noise presently desisted from barking. Then Richard moved on through the grass till he came where he could see the front of Bewdley Manor-house. Three tall windows were lighted, one somewhat brilliantly, the next less so, the third least of all. It was clear that all three belonged to one room, perhaps a drawing-room, and that the lamp that illumined it was at one end. The window which was at the further end was half open, the blind was drawn up, and Richard could make out gilt frames to large pictures on a dark wall. He stood, looking at the three windows, wondering whether a shadow would pass, and by the shadow he could tell who it was that passed. Did he desire to see Josephine again? He shrank from so doing; but he was uneasy at the thought that she was in this great house a servant, with fellows like Polkinghorn about her. As he stood thus looking up, he heard the notes of a piano issue from the open window. The first chords that were struck made him start and a shiver pass through his limbs. Then he heard a clear voice, rich and sweet, sing:

O wie wogt es sich schön auf der Fluth
Wenn die müde Welle im Schlummer ruht!

It was the familiar song from *Oberon*. When Richard heard this, he put his hands to his ears to shut out the sound, and ran as hard as he could run with his faulty thigh along the road; and the dog heard his retreating steps and barked furiously. Cable heeded nothing, but ran on, with the sweat breaking out on his brow and dripping from his face, as it had dripped on that night when he ran to Brentwood Hall, and as now the dew was dripping from the leaves of the trees in the park. Only when he reached the river-bank outside the park gate, away from the sight of the house and the sound of the song, did he halt and strike his stick angrily, passionately, into the oozy soil, and cry out, half sobbingly, half savagely: 'A low lot! A low lot!'

CHAPTER XLIV.

A ROLLING STONE.

Richard Cable started homewards. He had ridden his cob to Exeter, and brought him on thence with the cattle by train. Now he drove him all the way back from Somersetshire to St. Kerian, but not with the van full of calves the whole way, for he sold them all before he had reached Launceston. Then, instead of going on, he bought up young cattle in Devon, to the north of the road, where is also a wide tract of very poor clay soil, worthless except for rearing stock. In the north of Devon the soil varies to such an extent, that one field may let for five times the price of the field next to it. Where the red soil runs, there anything will grow; where the white clay lies, there nothing will thrive. Now, after the old Roman road from Exeter to Launceston passes North Tawton, it leaves the red soil for ever. On the south of the road is good land—crops wave, and trees grow to stately dimensions; for there limestone and volcanic tufa break out and warm and enrich the soil above. To the north of the road is clay, and clay only, to the ocean, where crops are meagre and trees are stunted. Cable's eye had been sharpened, and he learned and took in much as he went along the road. Having bought young stock from the poor land, he turned his back on the west, and drove them to Exeter, and trucked them on to Somersetshire again; but not this time to Bewdley and Bath, but to the neighbourhood of Wells. He sold these readily enough; and then he bought more calves and trucked them to Exeter, where on this occasion he had left his cob and van; and then drove them to Launceston, disposing of most of them before reaching home.

From Exeter he brought with him seven pairs of new shoes, with perfectly clean smooth soles, of a pleasant brown; and ever and anon, as he drove in his van, with the calves bleating behind him, he opened the bag that contained the shoes, and took them out and counted them, and kissed the soles, thinking of the little feet they would clothe when brought to St. Kerian. Richard had to halt continually on the road and buy milk for his calves, dip his fingers in the milk and let the calves suck them. It was tedious work; but

it would have been less tedious to another, for no other was drawn homewards by such strong fibres from his heart. At length he arrived within sight of St. Kerian, and drove through the village street. The innkeeper came out to ask what luck he had had. 'Middling,' answered Dick; but he did not halt at the inn-door. Then out of his smithy came Penrose, the blacksmith, with a cheery salute and his big black hand extended.

'Well, Cable, glad to seey' back. The little 'uns be all peart [bright].'

Richard nodded. He held the reins in one hand and the whip in the other; he did not accept the offered hand, but drove on.

'What, Mr. Cable!' exclaimed the parson, who was on his rounds. 'You're home again! I'm glad to see you have a carriage. Your mother is fairly well, and the children—blooming rosebuds.'

'Thanky', sir!' Richard put the handle of his whip to his cap, and drove on.

'Dicky!' shouted Farmer Tregurtha over the hedge, 'so you're home with your pockets lined with money. I must look out for Summerleaze, or you'll snap it away from under my feet.'

'I take nothing for which I cannot pay,' answered Richard; then he turned a corner and stopped the van, whereat the calves, thinking it meant milk and a suck at his hands, began to bleat. But he was not thinking at that moment of the calves. He saw before him the cob cottage, the limewashed walls gleaming white in the sun, and before the door stood Mrs. Cable with little Bessie in her arms, and about her the rest, looking down the road with eager eyes.

What a happy evening that was, with his children clustering round the calves, dipping their hands in the milk and laughing, but first shrinking at the mouths of the young creatures sucking their hands. Little Bessie must pat the calves, and she quite fell in love with a young dappled Guernsey. What a pleasant supper when they all sat round the table, but not before there had been a slight scuffle which should sit beside their father. Was there ever so dainty a dish served up at Hanford Hall whilst Richard dined there, as that great bowl of potatoes and turnips that now steamed in the midst of the table round which the bright and happy faces smiled and shone! Then, when supper was

over, came the trying on of the new shoes; and each in turn sat on her grandmother's lap, whilst Richard knelt on the slate floor and fitted the covers on to the dear little feet he loved so well. For Bessie there was a pair of glazed patent leather that shone like sticking-plaster, and they had rosettes with steel buckles and beads over the instep. Bessie laughed and danced in her grandmother's arms, and then cried to be held by her dada; and clung fast to him, and would not be put down, or go to bed till he undertook to undress her, wash her, comb her hair, hear her prayers, and sit by her till she fell asleep.

The happiness was of short duration. Next morning, Richard went farther with his van and cob and calves, to the 'Magpie,' to give an account of what he had done, how he had succeeded, and what he proposed to do, to Jacob Corye.

'There now,' said the landlord of the 'Magpie,' when he heard the results and saw his money, 'I be glad, I be, to handle the cash; but I be main better pleased to know that what some say are the maggots in my head have turned into butterflies, and not blue-bottles.'

After that, of course a second venture was agreed upon. Richard was to remain a week at home, make what arrangements he thought necessary for the children, and then start again on the road by Launceston to Exeter, driving young cattle before him. He was now eager to be gone. Not that he desired to be away from his family, but that his ambition was fired. He was resolved at no very distant date to secure Summerleaze, and build thereon the house which he had seen in a dream.

Throughout the week he was at home Richard was silent concerning one matter. He was ready to talk to his little ones about what he had seen—concerning the children of Mrs. Stokes, the whirligig he had come across at Okehampton, and the grand cathedral at Exeter, and the piebald horses of a circus that had passed him on the road, and the militia reviewed at Wells, and the hot springs with foul smell at Bath; and he had told his mother of his difficulties and of his successes, of his mistakes and of his gained experiences, of his prospects for the future, of the certainty of his insuring a small fortune; but he said not a word about the discovery he had made at Bewdley. Nevertheless, that discovery troubled his mind and kept him wakeful at night. It was a discovery that perplexed him beyond power of setting to rights. Why

was Josephine in service? If in service, how came she to be singing and playing in the drawing-room that night? He knew so much of the ways of good houses as this, that a lady's-maid is not expected to sit down to the piano in the room with her mistress. He also knew so much of Josephine as this, that for her to associate with such creatures as Mr, Polkinghorn would be unendurable. He thought of his own Polly: perhaps the maids at Bewdley were like her. Polly was a good girl, fond of work, and fond also of finery when she could get it. Polly had not been blessed by heaven with much mind, and what little mind she had was uncultivated. She could read, but read only trash—police intelligence and novels. She could write, but not spell. She could talk, but not of anything beyond village gossip. Could Josephine have borne the daily society of Polly, could she breathe in such an atmosphere of vulgar interests?

Either Josephine was very much other than what he had supposed, or she was now completely out of her proper element, and suffering accordingly. It was possible that her pride, her headlong self-will, coupled with pride, had made her throw up all the advantages she had got by the will of Gabriel Gotham. Richard recollected now that she had told him her mother's fortune, which ought to have come to her, had been mismanaged and lost. It was by no means impossible that Mr. Cornellis, for whom Richard entertained the greatest aversion, might have met with a reverse and be ruined. Then how was it that Josephine, being so close a friend of the Sellwoods, was allowed by them to drop into a menial situation? They were well off, always ready to do what was kind, and be helpful to those in distress. Yet it was the Sellwoods who, according to Mr. Polkinghorn, had recommended Josephine to her present place.

'I wish I could have seen her,' mused Richard. 'It would be painful to me—but for all that, I wish I had seen her; and when I go back again to Bewdley, I must try and see her without letting her see me. I'd like to know how she bears the change. I'd like to see how she looks—as a servant.' He laughed. 'And to be considered a low lot!'

Dicky Cable did not go near Bath on his second expedition; he went into another part of Somerset. He was away for some time. After this he was able to stand unsupported by Jacob Corye. He became a cattle-jobber on his own bottom; but he always dealt for Corye whilst dealing for himself, and to

Corye he always gave double profits, for it was the landlord of the 'Magpie' who had put the plum into his mouth. He began to turn over money very fast. He had a good deal of expense on his journeys: he had to lodge himself and his horse, and feed his young stock and give skimmed milk to his calves; and the railway carriage ran away with money; and the seven little mouths at home cost more every day, for appetites grew with their bodies, and their clothing and shoeing cost more also. Nevertheless, Cable put away money.

But we are looking too far ahead. He had not started on his own foundation when Christmas came; he did so with the New Year.

The opinions of the St. Kerian people underwent a change respecting him. Some were glad at the improvement in his circumstances; but others begrudged it. Most wondered that he should have done what was now obvious to all; they were uneasy at his having got his feet on Luck's road, when there were so many worthier men, such as themselves, who wandered in Poverty Lane. Now, those who formerly had not noticed him, nodded when he passed; and those who in former days had nodded shook hands; and those who had in the time when he broke stones shaken hands, now asked him to lend them money, which was the greatest mark of esteem they could show him. The St. Kerian folk were in that transition mood in which it would take very little on his part to bring them into the most cordial relationship, and make them forget that on one side he was not a true-blooded Cornishman. The women were specially disposed in his favour, because he had proved himself so tender and true a father to his orphan girls; and some were most especially so disposed because they considered him to be a widower. But Richard Cable took no notice of the revolution. He called at none of the houses of the villagers; he scarcely spoke to those whom he passed; he returned their salutations without cordiality; and he never went to the public-house, which was the more to be marvelled at, because, whilst from home, he lived entirely in taverns. Perhaps that was why he cared for none when at St. Kerian, and spent all his available time in his cob cottage among his seven little maids.

Christmas came—the second since Richard Cable and his family had been at St. Kerian. The first saw him in great poverty, without prospect of betterment; the second shone on

him with a future opening before him; but it did not find him, for all that, with a more softened and Christmas-like spirit. He arrived at home on the eve.

Over the great fire that burned on what is locally termed the 'heath-grate' hung a caldron, in which was boiling the plum-pudding for the morrow. Cable sat in the armchair by the fire, with little Bessie on one knee and Susie on the other, with Lettice standing in the chair behind him, scrambling up his back, and the four other children sitting on their stools in a semicircle round the fire. They were in neat stuff frocks, with clean white pinafores over them. The father was full of joy and fun, when a tap came at the door, and some neighbours entered to congratulate him on his return and to hear the news.

They stood before the fire, thrusting the little girls aside, talking, asking questions, hinting pretty broadly their desire to know how his affairs went—well-intentioned visitors, with kindly meant inquiries, but vexing to Cable, who did not care to be disturbed. He answered shortly, with gravity; he showed no pleasure at their visit; he put aside their questions unanswered. He did not ask the intruders to be seated and take a pipe; so that, after a few minutes, somewhat disconcerted, they retired. An opportunity for conciliation had been offered and rejected.

Richard Cable had never cared for the society of his fellow-men, even in the old days, but then he had not shunned it. Now that he had entered on a business which took him among men, he valued his privacy more than formerly. He was not at home for very long, and whilst there he desired to be left alone with his precious ones. The St. Kerian people were not travellers; they remained stationary where their fathers had stood, and their grandfathers before them. Richard Cable had become a rolling stone, after having fallen among them with every promise of becoming a fixture. The proverb says that a rolling stone gathers no moss; but the St. Kerian stones collected very little, and Cable at every roll came back with the gold moss clinging to him. A rolling stone he was, stony to all he encountered, hard, unyielding, but with his centre of gravity never displaced, always drawing him towards the cob cottage; and when he was there, there was nothing stony about him, there he was soft, soft as moss.

Scarce had the visitors gone, when another rap came at the door, and before he had called to enter, the door flew open,

and in danced several mummers. St. George, with a tin pot and a cock's feather for helmet and plume, and a fishpan lid for shield, and a red shawl for mantle; the dragon of pasteboard overlaid with tinfoil. King Herod with a gold-paper crown and corked moustache and beard. Beelzebub with a black sweep's suit and complexion to match. Some of the smallest of the children began to cry—Bessie and Susie, who were on his knees; Lettice stood behind him, peering over his shoulder, feeling herself safe behind such a bulwark; but the others laughed, jumped about like kids, and clapped their hands. Cable would have driven the mummers out; he threatened them; but Mary and Martha interposed and entreated him to let them see the show. Then ensued the old-fashioned masque of St. George and the Dragon in doggerel rhyme. The mummers were all boys, and they had learnt the traditional play by heart. They recited their parts without much animation and action, as though saying their collects in Sunday school. It was dull fun to Cable; but it delighted the little maidens, their delight reaching its climax when Mary cried out: 'Oh! I know who St. George is! You are Walter Penrose.' Thereat St. George interrupted the performance to pull a huge, red-streaked apple, a quarendon, out of his trousers-pocket, and present it to Mary with a bow and a laugh: 'And this is St. George's Christmas present to little Mary Cable.'

Then the demon brandished his club, made of sacking, enclosing hay, and, banging the performers with it right and left, shouted at the top of his voice:

> Up and cometh Beelzebub,
> And knocketh them all down with his club.

Whereupon the mummers danced out of the door. Then Richard Cable stood up, put down Bessie and Susie, and shook off Lettice, and went to the door and put the bolt across it and turned the lock.

'O father!' cried Mary, 'wasn't that kind of Walter? He is so good! He always gives me sugar-plums whenever I see him.'

'My dear Mary,' said her father, 'I object to your receiving any presents from any St. Kerian people. Walter—— Is he the blacksmith's son? Well, the time will come when you will hold up your heads too high to take apples from and

play with the sons of common village blacksmiths. Throw that apple away!'

'O father!' cried all the little girls together.

'Don't say that,' pleaded Mary. 'Take out your knife, father, and cut the apple into seven.'

'Very well,' he said moodily; 'this time, but this only. Let it be the last; and understand, Mary, that you take nothing again from Walter Penrose or from any other St. Kerian child.'

'But, papa,' said little Mary, 'Walter is so kind, and when we get old, I am going to be his little wife.'

'Never,' said Cable angrily—'never.'

Then, all at once, outside burst forth the song of the Christmas carollers:

> Hark! the herald-angels sing
> Glory to the new-born King,
> Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
> God and sinners reconciled.

But Richard Cable did not open the door and look forth and wish the singers a glad Noël, and offer them plumcake and a jug of cider. In all his children's eyes looking at him was trembling entreaty, but he heeded it not. He sat by the fire, looking gloomily into it.

Then the seven little girls raised their voices, and sang inside the cottage, along with the choir without:

> Joyful, all ye nations rise,
> Join the triumph of the skies;
> With the angelic host proclaim,
> Christ is born in Bethlehem.

'My children sing better than the trained choristers outside,' said Cable to himself. He sat motionless, though the carollers waited without for their Christmas greeting. They did not get it. The rolling stone was stone indeed; and the more it rolled, and the more the prospect of gathering gold-moss opened before it, the more flinty it became.

Then the choir went away, and the hushed children and their silent father heard the singers carolling before another house half a mile away. The music came to them faint and sad. There was no peace, no mercy mild and reconciliation in the heart of Richard Cable that Christmas eve.

CHAPTER XLV.

MISS OTTERBOURNE.

JOSEPHINE'S position in Bewdley Manor had gone through a change, a change advantageous in one way, but bringing with it great vexations.

Miss Otterbourne was a small old lady of delicate bones and mind, of small ideas and petty interests. She lived in her great house without a companion, made calls in her grand carriage when the coachman allowed her to use the fat horses, pottered in her conservatories about her flowers, and picked them only when suffered to do so by the head-gardener. She kept a great many servants, and was badly served by them. She spent a great deal of money and had little pleasure out of it. Josephine was shocked to see how the old lady was pillaged by all her attendants. She kept cows, and bought her butter; poultry, and purchased her eggs; had gamekeepers, but ate very little game. Her pheasants cost her about their weight in silver. She grew grapes and apricots and nectarines and peaches, which the gardener sold in Bath, and put the money into his own pocket. Her porcelain was broken, and had to be replaced incessantly, because the china shopkeeper tipped the breakers for every breakage. Every tradesman who attended the house put money into the servants' pockets, on the understanding that they made work for artisans there. Every shopkeeper who dealt with the house gave a percentage to the servants to encourage waste. Coal-waggons were incessantly bringing their loads to the house, which apparently consumed as much as a glass-furnace; but the coal-cellar door was left always open for all the cottagers to supply themselves from it, and a sack was deposited every turn of the waggon at the gardener's, or the gamekeeper's, or at the lodge, or at the coachman's, or at the house of the mother of the boy who cleaned the knives. The gardener was annually carrying off prizes at flower-shows; but the greenhouses were never properly stocked, and fresh supplies, enough to fill every stage, had to be ordered from the nurserymen every autumn and spring. Fifteen hogsheads of ale were got rid of in that house in the twelvemonths, by a household of teetotalers; the wine cellar needed the laying down of ex-

pensive wines every year, although Miss Otterbourne no longer gave dinner-parties. A milliner and her assistant from Bath were engaged in Bewdley House half their time, yet Miss Otterbourne only had two new gowns in the year. Bewick's 'British Birds' and 'Fishes' and 'Quadrupeds' deserted the shelves of the library, as if they were leaving the Ark of Noah, and turned up in a second-hand bookseller's at Bath. Valuable pieces of old Worcester china, fine Chelsea figures, unaccountably got mislaid; but certain dealers in London would have been happy to sell them back to the good lady.

'My servants,' said Miss Otterbourne, 'are perfectly trusty. I have left my purse about; I have allowed coppers to remain on my chimney-piece, and I have never lost a farthing.'

It is a curious fact that the conscience of many domestic servants draws a line at money. It is most rare to find one who will purloin a coin; but beyond that line, in far too many cases, all scruple ceases.

Josephine soon discovered how her mistress was being plundered. The housekeeper winked at the petty robberies; she shut her eyes to a good deal more that filled Josephine with horror and disgust. John Thomas Polkinghorn was vain and foolish, but he was not vicious. Among the many men attached to the house in one capacity or another, he was the most respectable; but the old butler, Vickary, on whom Miss Otterbourne chiefly relied as a trusty servant who had the interests of the family at heart, was a prime source of evil in the place. Josephine made him keep his distance. She behaved towards him with such proud reserve and scarce veiled abhorrence, that he scowled at her and prophesied her speedy dismissal. The other servants, all cringing to the butler, took his tone, and behaved to Josephine with insolence, at least in his presence. Yet, behind his back they were ready to speak to her with kindness, and show her little attentions. They let her understand that they groaned under his tyranny, but were too timorous to revolt. The house was, moreover, too good to be left, except for some extraordinary chance of betterment; and servants who came there well-intentioned gradually swallowed their scruples and sank to the general level.

That Josephine was not more with them was due to the forethought of Mrs. Sellwood, who wrote confidentially to her sister to tell her that Josephine had known better

days, was well educated, and by birth a lady, forced by circumstances she was not at liberty to disclose, to go into menial service. Miss Otterbourne was the kindest-hearted of old maids, a generally kind-hearted race, but she was weak. She had fallen a prey to several unscrupulous ladies'-maids in succession. Girls well recommended had come to her, and the general bad tone of the house had lowered them; she herself had contributed to their deterioration by ill-judged kindness, by making of them confidantes, and almost friends. She had trusted them, when they were neither by education nor character worthy to be trusted. They had abused her kindness. One after another had taken to drink. Miss Otterbourne would not believe it; she supposed poor Jane or Marianne or Emily was subject to fits, or had a weak heart; and Mrs. Sellwood had sometimes to come down from Essex to rout a disagreeable and disreputable companion from her sister's house. The old lady, perhaps feeling her loneliness, and with her heart craving for love, was so liable to fall under the dominion of her servants, that Mrs. Sellwood was glad to be able to assist Josephine and her own sister at once, to put the former with one who would be kind to her, and to give the latter a companion who was perfectly reliable.

Miss Otterbourne at once perceived that her new attendant was what her sister had described her—a lady, and with her natural kindness, did what lay in her power to soften to her the hardship of her lot.

On the morning after her arrival at Bewdley, Josephine rose with a weight on her heart. She had not slept well. She was pale, and her eyes looked large and sad when she appeared before Miss Otterbourne to assist her in dressing. The old lady spoke gently to her. She told her that she had heard from Mrs. Sellwood that Josephine had met with troubles which had forced her into a situation for which she was not born, and assured her that she would be a good mistress to her, and not exact from her more than was really needed.

'My servants are all so honest and so respectable, and so devoted to me, that I am sure you will like them. They never give me any trouble, and set a good example to the entire parish. But as you belong by birth to a superior class, you will not mix with them much. I shall expect you to be chiefly about my person, and when not engaged in dressing me to attend to my wardrobe. I should be glad if you could read to

me in the evenings. I cannot use my eyes by lamplight—at least not much, and the evenings are tedious to me. I play patience, but one tires in time even of patience.'

Later on Miss Otterbourne made overtures to get into Josephine's confidence, but without avail. Josephine's secret was not one she cared to share. She soon fell into her work; it was not difficult, and the old lady was not exacting. She felt how considerate towards her Miss Otterbourne was, and she was grateful for it, but not inclined to open her heart to her. Miss Otterbourne was not one who could understand her course of conduct or appreciate her motives.

The monotonous life that Josephine was now leading, the constant restraint, the necessity for reserve, the tediousness of listening to the weak talk of the old lady, and the repugnance she felt for the society of her fellow-servants, were almost more than Josephine could bear, and only her strong resolution to go through with what she had undertaken kept her at Bewdley. As she began to see how completely Miss Otterbourne was deceived in her servants, how she was cheated, and what a demoralising influence in the place the trusty butler was, she became uneasy in mind. She did not like to allow her mistress to continue in her delusion, and yet she was averse from telling tales of her fellow-domestics.

The liking which Miss Otterbourne showed for her excited the jealousy of the female servants and the suspicion of Mr. Vickary. This latter saw that he would not be able to influence Josephine and get her under his power. He was irritated at the contempt she showed him, and aware that she saw through and mistrusted him. He also saw that she was acquiring a preponderating influence over the mistress, which threatened his supremacy.

Josephine had more to think about than her own past troubles; but, unfortunately, those concerns which now occupied her thoughts were in themselves troubles. She missed her old freedom. She was shy of asking a favour of Miss Otterbourne, or she would have entreated to be given a bedroom to herself. The old lady did not know that she had not one. The domestic arrangements were left to the housekeeper, and those maids were given separate rooms who stood highest in her favour. At night Josephine hardly enjoyed refreshing sleep; she was not so much tired out with her work as fagged—her nerves were overwrought, not her muscles. What would she not now have given for a row on the sea or a stroll by her-

self in the garden! Sometimes the oppressiveness of her life threatened to drive her mad, and she made efforts to think of the sea, the gulls, the passing ships, to give breath and space to her mind, that was becoming cramped in Bewdley life.

While she read in the evenings to Miss Otterbourne her mind was absent, for the books which the old lady selected were uninteresting to Josephine. She, like Aunt Judith, was a veal-eater, and must have her mental diet devoid of the blood of ideas and the firmness of intellectual growth. Josephine had been so independent hitherto that the constraint of having in all things to submit to the will of another, to hear ineptitudes without replying, to go through a mechanical round of duties that led to nothing, were an especial trial to her. But she had the clear sense to see that it was a schooling she needed. She was learning self-restraint.

One evening the old lady was tired of the reading, did not care for patience, and as she had a little of the fretfulness induced by nettlerash still about her, she began to grumble at never being able to hear a bit of music. With diffidence, and yet eagerness, Josephine volunteered to play and sing. She was diffident because she did not know how her mistress would take the offer; she was eager because she had not touched the piano since she left Hanford, and her soul was one that hungered and thirsted for music—a soul that could only find its full expression in pain or pleasure through music. Thus it came about that Richard Cable heard her sing on the night he was lingering under the trees of the park.

The little old lady was not without that atmosphere of romance hanging about her heart that enlarged and transformed common objects and gave them ephemeral and fantastic values and shapes. She thought about what Mrs. Sellwood had told her of Josephine, and as she had taken a great fancy for Josephine she wanted to learn more. She wrote for particulars to her sister, but unsuccessfully, and every attempt to wrest her story from the girl equally failed. As she had so few facts on which to build, she fell back on conjecture, and speedily came to treat her conjectures as assured realities. There could be no question that Josephine was a lady, the child of gentlefolks, who had been suddenly ruined—so she supposed—by the failure of the great Coast of Guinea Bank, which had recently brought down so many families. She was an orphan, and had lost everything, and she had fled her old home and its associations owing to a love

affair with a gentleman of position to whom she had been engaged, but who, having no resources himself, had broken off the match on her losing her fortune. Miss Otterbourne had in former days had several offers; but as she never could assure herself that the suitors were not in love with her estate rather than herself, she had refused them all; and now, in her old age, had a longing for a little romance, and a desire to take some part in the great concert of love that bursts from all creation, if she were only to play a little feeble accompaniment to the song of another. What a flutter it produces in an old heart on which hopes and loves have flashed and flickered and died out to white dust, to be able, before the last death-chill falls, to assist at the kindling, or to fan when lighted, or to sit by and hearken to the roar of a love-fire! So poor old Miss Otterbourne, having made out to her own satisfaction and sincere conviction that Josephine was in love and had been badly treated, turned the matter about in her mind, and schemed whether it were possible for her to take up the broken engagement and hammer and weld it together again. How she was to do this she did not know. She did not even know the gentleman. But again imagination went to work, and showed her that he was endeavouring to get into a Government situation. Miss Otterbourne knew and was connected with persons of position and influence, and might possibly induce them to get him a secretaryship or a colonial appointment. The kind little heart made its plans. The letters were thought out, and the list of those to whom application was to be made was drawn up. All that Miss Otterbourne needed to know to put all her engines in play was the name and position of the man. But when she approached the subject, however delicately, Josephine winced, changed colour, trembled, and entreated permission to leave the room.

'There is no help for it,' said Miss Otterbourne to herself; 'I must wait till I have gained her confidence. Poor young people! poor dear girl! She is growing thin and pale here. I can see the change in her. Hope deferred maketh the heart sick. It is only hope deferred, not extinguished. I am clever in these matters; I will make all right in time.'

Miss Otterbourne was warmly attached to her nephew, Captain Sellwood, who would succeed to Bewdley after her decease, when he would assume by royal license the name and arms of Otterbourne in addition to Sellwood. The old lady had much family pride in her, and loved to talk of the family

greatness, its achievements and its matches in the past. It was a sad thing that Cholmondely Otterbourne, her brother, had died early, and that thus the direct male representation ceased. As the old lady loved to talk, and loved especially to talk of her nephew, on whom her ambition concentrated, she was not silent with Josephine.

'I suppose you have seen him, Cable?' she said. 'If you know Mrs. Sellwood, you have no doubt seen the captain. He is a very fine man, and has such splendid eyes, like those of an ox. I wish he would marry. I am getting to be an old woman, and I want to see the young generation settled and another rising about it. I should be happy, I think, quite happy, with little grand-nephews and nieces, nephews especially, trotting about these passages and up and down the stairs. I am afraid that Captain Sellwood must have met with disappointment. You have not heard of such a rumour, have you, Cable?'

'There has been no such tale, Miss Otterbourne, as far as I am aware.'

'I cannot conceive of a girl refusing him; he is so handsome, so dignified, and has such eyes, such ox-like eyes! If he has been refused, it must have been by some great heiress, who thinks overweeningly of herself, or by a duke's daughter, or a baroness in her own right. You have seen Captain Sellwood, I suppose, Cable?'

'Yes, ma'am, I have seen him.' She always spoke respectfully to Miss Otterbourne, as a servant to a mistress.

'What do you think of him? Have you ever seen his equal?—Except——' The old lady laughed. 'That is not quite a fair question.' She assumed a roguish air. 'Every girl thinks one man the ideal of what man should be, but after—after that one, eh, Cable?'

Josephine hesitated; then evaded the answer by saying: 'I spoke the exact truth, Miss Otterbourne, about there being no reports circulating concerning Captain Sellwood; but I believe it is true, and Mr. and Mrs. Sellwood know it, that he was refused.'

'Who was she?' asked Miss Otterbourne.

'A very unworthy person,' answered Josephine.

That the captain was certain to visit Bewdley, and that she would have to meet him—she in the capacity of a servant—occurred to Josephine, and made her uneasy. But on further consideration this uneasiness passed away; it was

bred of pride, and her pride was much broken. The prospect that he would come to Bewdley gave her courage and hope. Before he arrived he would have been prepared to see her; his father or mother would be certain to do that.

She thought a good deal about him, as Miss Otterbourne spoke of him so frequently, and she trusted that his arrival would relieve her from one of her great distresses. She could mention to him the condition of affairs in the house. As heir to the estate, as the person responsible next to her mistress, he ought to be told everything. Then he could act as he saw fit. She would have fulfilled her duty, and the responsibility would rest on the proper shoulders.

'Captain Sellwood comes on Tuesday,' said Miss Otterbourne one day. 'Tell Mrs. Grundy to have the Blue Room ready.'

Josephine drew a long breath. 'I am so glad!' she said. The exclamation escaped her unintentionally. Miss Otterbourne looked surprised, and then annoyed, and said no more to her that evening.

CHAPTER XLVI.

A CHUM.

Once, annually, whilst he was in England, did Captain Sellwood pay his aunt a visit. He stayed with her a fortnight; and she took him round to show him to her old friends, and show him the young ladies of the neighbourhood among whom he was at liberty to pick and choose—ladies by birth and breeding, and with at least something to bring with them. As yet he had not picked and chosen in the region round Bewdley; he had contented himself with exciting the admiration of the old ladies, to whom he devoted himself with more eagerness than to the young. They were his aunt's cronies, and he made an effort to please his aunt by showing courtesy to her friends.

The family coach went to the station to meet the captain, and Miss Otterbourne awaited his arrival impatiently. Josephine's heart was in a flutter. 'Shall I leave the room?' she asked, suddenly rising from her needlework in the win-

dow. Miss Otterbourne had got into the way of making her sit in the same room with her much of her time.

'No, Cable,' answered the old lady—'no need for that. You have, I daresay, seen the captain, and he will probably know you.'

In fact, Miss Otterbourne was curious to observe how they met; for she knew nothing for certain about Josephine's origin, nor of the extent of her acquaintance, nor of its character, with the Sellwoods.

Josephine remained, but stood silent, in the window, withdrawn as much as possible from sight. Captain Sellwood came in, and was greeted with love and pride by his aunt. 'My dear fellow! How you have grown! But—I do believe I see a careworn expression in your face, as if the course of something—something—had not run smooth.'

He turned abruptly from her and came directly to Josephine, who, in spite of her efforts to remain composed, coloured and trembled. 'We have met before—at Hanford,' he said, with a bow and extended hand; but whether he spoke to explain his conduct to his aunt, or to introduce himself to Josephine, who might not recollect him, Miss Otterbourne could not discover.

'You will be pleased to hear that the rector and my mother are in flourishing condition,' he went on. 'I hope I may be able to inform them, when I write, that you are well and happy.' He spoke civilly, formally, yet kindly; and what he said might have been addressed indiscriminately to a lady or a lady's-maid.

'The rogue!' said Miss Otterbourne to herself. 'He, also, wants to keep me in the dark. There is some mystery; but I shall worm it out.'

Josephine kept away from the drawing-room whilst the captain was there; her mistress did not need her when she had her nephew to talk to. She hoped to have an opportunity of speaking with him in private before long, that she might relieve her mind, after which it was her intention to leave the service of Miss Otterbourne. It did not advantage her to remain there longer. Her mistress had drawn her into association with herself, and she could associate with ladies as at Hanford. As for the servants at Bewdley, she did not wish to be on terms of familiarity with them. They did not represent the class to which Richard belonged. She must seek representatives of his order elsewhere.

One evening, the housemaid who shared her room told her that a sister and cousin had come to Bewdley and had asked her to meet them and walk with them to the station. She had, however, her duties in the house, and could not go out, leaving these neglected. As for the under-housemaid, she was engaged with her own work, and could not be trusted to arrange the rooms—would Josephine mind relieving her of this for an hour or two. 'It's the captain's two rooms have to be looked after,' said the young woman. 'If you'll do this for me to-day, Cable, I'll help you what I can another time.'

Josephine at once, good-naturedly, consented.

Captain Sellwood occupied the best bedroom, with a small sitting-room adjoining, and on the other side a dressing-room. He did not care for a fire in his bedroom; but there was one in the sitting-room, and there his aunt allowed him to smoke. He had no valet with him to attend to his clothes; and after he was dressed for dinner, the housemaid folded those he had taken off and put them away, and got the room ready for the night. The sitting-room had to be made tidy: the scraps of letters and envelopes to be picked up; his newspaper to be folded and placed on the table; his cigar end, left on the mantelshelf, to be buried in the red depths of the fire; a flower-glass upset on the side-table, to be refilled, the blossoms rearranged, and the water to be wiped up. How untidy men are!—No, not all men—not Richard. And had not Josephine been just as careless when in her own house?

She put everything together in the sitting-room. Captain Sellwood had worn gloves lined with swansdown, which his mother had insisted on his wearing whilst on the journey; but either the moth had got into them, or the down was badly put on at first, and, as he found the wool coming off, whilst he was smoking he amused himself with picking it off the inside of his gloves and throwing little tufts on the floor, where it adhered to the pile of the Brussels carpet. The collecting of this down engaged Josephine some time, and she said to herself: 'If people only knew the trouble they give by their want of consideration!' and then remembered she would have done the same in former years. She was engaged picking the particles out of the carpet pile, when the bedroom door opened and Captain Sellwood came in, with one patent-leather boot on his foot and the other in his hand. Josephine looked up as the door opened, and rose.

'Oh,' said he, 'I am sorry. There is a peg in the sole that hurts me, and I have come for the poker to drive it down.'

Josephine rose from her knees, colouring.

'Do not let me disturb you,' he said. 'I will go away.' He had a crimson silk stocking on his unshod foot.

'Shall I knock down the peg for you, Captain Sellwood?' asked Josephine. 'There is a hammer in the housemaid's cupboard.'

'Not on any consideration; but if you will kindly fetch me the hammer, I shall be grateful. I do not know the whereabouts of the said cupboard.' He held out his hand to help her up.

'What have you been about?' he asked.

'Collecting all these particles of swansdown. They are difficult to get out of the carpet.'

'I threw them there,' he said; 'but I am glad it has given me the opportunity of speaking to you alone, which I have desired, and failed to get.'

'I also,' said Josephine, 'wish to have a little private talk with you; but——' She looked round, and seeing that some one was in the corridor, and that the door of the sitting-room was open, she added: 'I will get the hammer for your boot at once.' Then she went out at the door and closed it behind her. She had a candle in her hand, and saw standing before her the butler, with a mocking expression on his sinister face.

'What are you doing there, Cable? You have no business in these rooms.'

She would rather not have answered him, and have passed on without a reply; but she considered that she had to return, and that the butler must be got rid of, so she answered with as much indifference as she could assume, that the housemaid was going to the station with her friends, and had asked her to see to the bedrooms.

'And to chat with the captain, who slipped away from table before his usual time.'

Josephine coloured at his insolence. She had taken Captain Sellwood's boot in her hand, and whether advisable or not, she must return with it. She went her way without appearing to notice the remark made by the butler. In ten minutes she returned with the boot; she had succeeded in knocking down the peg. As she came to the captain's door

she looked round to see that the coast was clear, and then tapped lightly. He opened at once, and she went in.

She was nervous and agitated. The situation was not a pleasant one; and if she had not made up her mind to speak to him, she would have given him the boot at the door and not have gone in. But three or four days of his visit to his aunt had elapsed without her obtaining the opportunity she sought, and she did not see how she could obtain the desired interview without attracting attention and arousing curiosity.

Mr. Vickary was probably satisfied with the explanation she had given. If he doubted it, he could satisfy himself in the kitchen that it was genuine. Notwithstanding her bringing-up, Josephine had much guilelessness in her. She knew Captain Sellwood well, had known him since she was a child, and was aware that he was an honourable man, who would never forget the respect due to her. He knew her story—that she was married; and that she had met with trouble. That he knew why she had gone into service, she did not suppose. He was aware that she had resigned her right to the inheritance of Gabriel Gotham—all Hanford knew that; but the reasons for her so doing were not divulged. The captain, she presumed, thought she had been forced to take service because she was left penniless. That he would not press her to tell him anything she kept to herself, she was well satisfied. He was a gentleman, if a somewhat heavy one.

She closed the door behind her, and went towards Captain Sellwood with something of her old frankness, holding his boot in her hand. 'I must have a little talk with you,' she said. 'And there is no time like the present. I hold you arrested by one foot. You shall not have your boot till you have listened to me.'

'I am not likely to run away from you, Mrs. Cable, unless you draw out of your quiver some of your old arrows; then, knowing their sharpness, I might in self-defence take to flight.'

'No; I have broken off all their heads. I will never hurt any one again—at least not with them.'

'Take a chair, Mrs. Cable.'

'I had rather stand.'

'And I insist on your being seated.'

She obeyed, taking a small armchair near the fire. He had lighted the candles on the mantelpiece, and stood by the

fire, with his elbow on the shelf, resting on his shod foot, with the red-stockinged foot crossed over the other.

'The matter about which I desire to speak to you,' she said, going at once to her point, 'concerns Miss Otterbourne. You and your mother ought to know how she is treated by her servants. She is robbed on all sides. She is surrounded by perfectly unscrupulous persons, who are in league against her. There are valuables in this house, heirlooms; nothing is safe from their rapacity. Dear Miss Otterbourne is so confiding that she leaves everything about—her keys, her chequebook; her drawers are not locked, and any one can get at her jewellery. The plate is entrusted to Mr. Vickary, and—some one ought to be entrusted with the looking after of Mr. Vickary. Is there a list of the plate? Do you think Miss Otterbourne herself knows what family jewels she has? I have ventured to entreat her to keep her bureau locked where she has some securities—she ought to send them to her banker's; but she likes to retain them in her own hands. I am sure the butler has been to that bureau, though I will not say he has abstracted anything. What I fear is—were anything to happen to your aunt—suppose a stroke, which is not impossible or improbable at her age, then—this house would be at the disposal of her servants. They might take what they liked, and who would stop them? An old lady ought never to be left as Miss Otterbourne is—without a relative by her to guard her interests.'

'Dear Mrs. Cable,' said Captain Sellwood, 'my mother cannot be here. It is also out of the question that I should. We had hoped—when you came——'

'Exactly, that I was to be life and body guard to her Majesty. I do not feel disposed to be that. I tell you the state of affairs, and then I go. I cannot remain here. Miss Otterbourne is very kind, and I like her; but I cannot remain. You can see that for yourself. Having revealed the misdemeanours of my fellow-servants, I must go as well as they.'

'I do not see that.'

'I do. I could not stay. There are other matters behind all this that I have told you; but you know enough.'

'What is to be done?'

'What is to be done?' repeated Josephine, with a return to her old contemptuous manner. 'You are a man, a soldier, and ask me that!'

'Precisely; because I am a man and a soldier, I know nothing about domestic matters; I cannot engage a new set of servants.'

'But you can induce your aunt to dismiss these.'

'And I know very well that with a new supply she would fare no better. She has had relays of ladies'-maids, and has demoralised them all—made very decent girls my mother has sent her, dishonest and given to drink.'

'Well, I have discharged my duty. It is for you to act on the information you have received. This house not only demoralises the ladies'-maids, but the entire parish. Your good old aunt, with a mind full of religion and kindliness, is poisoning every man, woman, and child who comes near her. Trust is a very good thing when well applied; but trust given to the untrustworthy aggravates the evil. Why, what will become of the servant-girls of this establishment when they marry? They have learned here to be dainty, thriftless, and dishonest; to take to themselves whatever comes to hand, and to use everything without consideration what it costs. They will make their husbands and families wretched and wicked.' Josephine spoke with vehemence, because she felt strongly, and had been bottling up her indignation ever since she had begun to see into the condition of affairs in the house, without the opportunity of giving it vent.

Captain Sellwood stood looking down at his unbooted foot, meditating. His face was troubled. 'It would be conferring on us the greatest favour, it would be laying us under a life-long obligation, if you would consent to stay as companion to my aunt.'

'I cannot. The captain who applies the match to the powder-room does not blow up the crew and provide for his own safety—they all go up into the air together. I cannot do what seems mean.'

'We have no claim whatever on you; but you are here on the spot—if——'

'No, Captain Sellwood—no! How slow you are to take a no!'

Then ensued another silence.

'I have said what I had to say, and now I must go.' She made a motion to rise. He waved his hand.

'I pray you, one moment longer. About yourself. If you insist on leaving this house, where will you go?'

'I do not know. I have not considered.'

'Excuse me, Mrs. Cable. I do not want to touch on matters that I have no right to put my finger on, but—we are old acquaintances of many, many years' standing. I cannot bear to think of your being in positions to which you were not born. Do not be offended. I am a clumsy man with my tongue, as you know very well.' He spoke with such truth and kindness, such real feeling in his voice, that Josephine's heart grew soft. 'I ask no questions; I want to know nothing about any of these matters that have occurred and that have affected you; but I do pray you—I pray you—do nothing without consulting my mother; and do not—do not be too proud to take her helping hand. Indeed, you can do my mother no greater favour than ask her to help you in any and every way.'

Josephine did not answer at once. It was not possible for her to answer with frankness without entering into an explanation of her circumstances, which she could not do to him. After thinking, and turning his boot about in her hand, she said: 'I am very sensible, Captain Sellwood, of your kindness; and I know how good and generous your dear mother is, and how I can rely as well on your father. He approves of all I have done. You must not think me wanting in generosity if I change the subject. You have drawn the conversation away from your aunt to me, and I had rather not have it turn about myself, but revert to what we spoke of at first.'

'As you will, Mrs. Cable.'

'I think that you must get a gentlewoman to live here as companion to Miss Otterbourne, and strike at once at Mr. Vickary. The housekeeper and the maid-servants are not bad-hearted; but no one in the household has the moral courage to withstand him. Try to induce your aunt to part with him and take a suitable companion. Then the servants' hall can be weeded leisurely.'

A tap at the door. The captain called out to come in, and Josephine looked round to see who asked admission. She was thinking only of what she was saying, and had forgotten where she was, and how strange it would seem to any one opening the door for her to be seated by Captain Sellwood's fire in his private sitting and smoking room talking confidentially with him.

In the doorway stood Miss Otterbourne; and Josephine caught a glimpse of the butler gliding away from behind her.

'Really!' exclaimed the old lady—'really—I am surprised—I—I——'

'There is your boot, Captain Sellwood,' said Josephine, starting up, suddenly conscious of her situation, and hurriedly left the room.

He took the boot, and slowly and clumsily drew it on. He also saw what an awkward position they had been in.

'Can you allow me a *tête-à-tête*?' asked the old lady, somewhat stiffly; 'or—do you prefer younger society?'

'It was,' he stammered—'my—my boot that we were engaged upon. We are old chums; we were chumming, aunt, only chumming.'

CHAPTER XLVII.

DISMISSAL.

After Mr. Vickary had seen Josephine leave Captain Sellwood's room with his boot, he waited about, keeping himself concealed, till she returned with the boot and shut the door, whereupon he went to Miss Otterbourne in the drawing-room, whither she had retired after dinner, and was waiting for her nephew to rejoin her, when he had sat sufficiently long over the wine and dessert.

'I beg your pardon, ma'am,' said the butler; 'I do hope I'm not taking a liberty, ma'am; but may I ask if you told Cable to go in and out as she liked of the captain's apartments?'

'Of course not, Vickary.'

'I'm sorry to trouble you, ma'am. I see her running in there a score of times—it's remarked by the servants, and rather unpleasant, and Mrs. Grundy says she has given no such orders; so we thought it best, ma'am, if I were to ask if you, ma'am, had empowered her so to do. You will excuse me, ma'am, but when there is talk—and when the young woman tells lies about it——'

'Lies, Vickary?'

'Well, ma'am, just now I see her go in there, and the captain there too. I said to her that I didn't consider it quite right—it was not her place; and she told me that the

housekeeper had set her to attend to the room, which, ma'am, I knew not to be true.'

'The captain is in the dining-room.'

'I'm sorry to differ from you, ma'am; but he went up very quickly to his rooms, and Cable was in after him directly. It must be very unpleasant, ma'am, for a young gentleman to be so run after, and it makes talk in the house.'

Miss Otterbourne was much astonished and greatly indignant. 'Do you mean to tell me, Vickary, that she is there now?'

'I believe so, madam.'

'And the captain is there?'

'I saw him by the fire; and Cable shut the door after her when she went in.'

'Go and fetch her at once.—No. I will go myself. I really—upon my word—to say the least—how inconsiderate.'

The old lady was very angry. She raised herself with difficulty from her armchair, drew a silk handkerchief over her shoulders, as a protection against damp or draught outside the room, and walked in the direction of her nephew's suite of apartments. When she opened the door and saw Josephine seated in an armchair on one side of the fire and the captain standing near her, in earnest conversation, she was as irritated as if her nettlerash had suddenly come out over her temper.

As soon as Josephine had left the room, Miss Otterbourne said—she was panting from having ascended a flight, and walked fast—'I—I am surprised. These may be Indian barrack habits, but—but——'

Captain Sellwood managed to get his boot on; his face was nearly the colour of his stocking.

'And only partly dressed too,' gasped Miss Otterbourne, 'half shod, and—and, with a hole in your stocking sole. Good heavens, how indelicate!'

'There was a peg in the boot,' explained Captain Sellwood.

'My dear Algernon, there generally are pegs in boots.'

'I mean—it hurt me, and I asked Josephine——'

'Josephine!'

'My dear aunt, we have known each other since children.'

'Oh!' The nettlerash was alleviated. But presently it

came out again. 'That does not explain her coming to visit you in your private room, sitting in your armchair.'

'Where would you have had her sit, aunt?'

'Algernon—she is a servant.'

'Aunt—she is a lady.'

'A real lady would never have run after you into your private apartments.'

'She did not run after me. She did not know I was there. She was picking up the swansdown I had inconsiderately strewed on the carpet, when I came in.'

'Then she should considerately have gone out.'

'I asked her for a hammer.'

'She had no right here.—And are you aware, Algernon, that you have had a hole the size of a threepenny piece in the sole of your foot, at the—heel, exposed? If you had had any sense of decency, you would have kept your foot flat on the carpet, instead of turning it up.—I don't care whether she is a lady by birth and breeding; she is no lady at heart, or she would never have sat here half an hour or three-quarters, staring at a bit of your heel exposed, the size of a threepenny piece. That alone stamps her. She has a nasty mind, and must go.'

'My dear aunt—surely you are hard in judging. There was a peg in my boot that stood up, and that hurt my foot, and no doubt at the same time worked the hole in my stocking.'

'That is very probable,' said Miss Otterbourne. But I should like to know, were you aware it was there?'

'No; I felt my heel painful; I do not think I noticed that my stocking was rent.'

'That excuses you, but not her.'

'Perhaps she did not see it.'

'Nonsense; of course she saw it.'

'Aunt, do sit down——'

'In that armchair vacated by her!—No! She has been looking at the hole in your stocking from that armchair.—I couldn't do it.'

'Do what, aunt?'

'Sit in the chair after that'—the old lady was now very angry, and very convinced that Josephine was no lady—gloating on it—positively gloating on it.'

'If any blame attaches to any one, it is to me,' said Cap-

tain Sellwood. 'I came in here out of my bedroom, with my boot in my hand, for the poker, with which——'

'Why did you not ring for John Thomas?'

'It was not worth while. When I came in, I found her on her knees picking up the bits of down, and I asked her for a hammer, or she offered one, I do not recollect which; and then she whipped the boot out of my hand and went off with it. It was most good-natured of her.'

'I object to young women being good-natured with young men. Good-nature may go too far.'

'And then I asked her to sit down. I wanted to talk to her about Hanford, and my mother, and mutual acquaintances. I was awfully sorry for her, to see her in such circumstances.'

I disapprove of young men being, as you call it, "awfully sorry" for distressed damsels; there is no knowing to what this awful sorrow may lead.'

'My dear aunt, it was natural. I have known her, and she was my playmate since we were children. I do like her. I always have liked her. Why, if I were in reduced circumstances, you, aunt, would not cut me.'

'No'—slightly mollified. 'But I am your aunt, and not a young creature. That makes mountains of difference.—And pray, is it only her reduced circumstances that stirs up in you such awful sorrow? She has had some other trouble I know. Are you acquainted with her intended? Have you brought her a message from him?'

'She has no intended.'

'Then it is broken off! I was sure she has had an affair of the heart, she has looked so peaky and pale since she has been here.'

'I do not know anything about her heart affairs,' said Captain Sellwood. 'I know that one or two fellows have been awfully fond of her.'

'Indeed! Is it possible that one who has confessed awful sorrow should also allow awful fondness? That leads to awful chumming, I have seen with my eyes.'

Captain Sellwood did not answer. He had spoken inconsiderately, and his aunt had taken advantage of his mistake.

'Good gracious, Algernon! You don't mean to tell me that there has been an attachment in this quarter?'

'No attachment,' he said, looking down and knitting

brows. 'For an attachment, the chain must hold at both ends.'

'Merciful powers, Algernon! Can your mother have sent this chum of yours here to be out of your way!—You were so infatuated, there was no knowing what lengths you would go, and my dear sister hoped that by putting a distance between you——'

'No, aunt—nothing of the sort.'

'But I must get to the bottom of this. There is something kept from me. Is it true that you have—that you have—harboured an unfortunate passion for this young person—this chum, as you call her?'

'I did love the young lady. We have known each other since we were children—at least since she was a little girl and I a big boy. She was so lively, so daring, so witty, I could not help loving her. But that is over now.'

'I should hope so—I should hope so indeed. A servant-maid—a servant-maid in my house! Lord have mercy on us! It is a wonder to me you did not turn Mohammedan in India, and put your neck under Juggernaut's car.'

'My dear aunt, what have Juggernaut and his car, and Mohammedanism and Josephine, to do with each other?'

'What a world we live in!' groaned Miss Otterbourne. 'Radicalism everywhere!'

'You forget, aunt, that she belonged to the class of life to which I belong. I may tell you this—that she has inherited a very handsome estate, but has conscientious scruples, which I do not understand, because I do not know the circumstances, against her enjoying it; and rather than violate her conscience, she has come into service to you. I honour and respect her for it, aunt!'

'But—she *is* a servant. She is my lady's-maid. It does not matter one hair whether she be heiress to untold millions or be a household drudge, the moral indelicacy is the same. She ought never to have sat here in your chair, talking to you when you had a hole in your stocking.—No, Algernon, you may say what you will—you may try to throw dust in my old eyes, but I shall never get over that hole in your stocking.' She had said enough and heard enough, and she left the room.—'Smoke your cigar,' she said as she left, 'and then come down to me. I presume you can light it without the assistance of your *chum*.'

When the old lady reached her drawing-room, she was so

hot that she sank into her chair and fanned herself for several minutes without getting any cooler. She rang the bell, and bade John Thomas send her Cable at once; and in two minutes Josephine came to her.

'Cable,' said Miss Otterbourne, fanning herself vigorously, 'I am surprised and offended. I *did* suppose you knew your place better, and had more delicacy than to sit in a room with a gentleman who had a hole in his stocking.'

'Had he? I did not know it, ma'am.'

'Did not know it? Of course you knew it! I saw by the direction of your eyes, the instant I came in, that you were examining it.'

'I did not give it a thought, even if I saw it, and I do not believe I did that. But, surely, ma'am, there is no harm in that.'

'No harm in sitting in an armchair in the same room with a gentleman, a captain in Her Majesty's service, who has been in India, when he is in a condition of partial undress! In such a house as this, such transgressions cannot be passed over. My nephew informs me that you have been old acquaintances; but old acquaintanceship does not remove all the barriers of female delicacy, and give a woman liberty to look at a man's foot without his boot covering it. It is perhaps allowed us to know that the other sex has feet because they are mentioned in the Bible; but we know it as we know that we have antipodes, by faith, not by sight.' She fanned herself with a vehemence which made her hood and fluttered the little silver barrels on both sides of her brow. 'Cable—it does not please me to have simultaneously under my roof a nephew as a visitor and an old acquaintance of his—*chum* he called you—as a lady's-maid. The situation is incongruous, and leads, as I have seen to-night, to injudicious conduct, which may, which has occasioned scandal; and such a house as this must be maintained in its dignity and irreproachability. Either the captain, my nephew, or you, my servant, must leave, and leave without delay.'

'Of course, Miss Otterbourne, I will go.'

'If you can make it convenient to depart to-morrow, you will oblige. I am sorry to say this, but—it is quite impossible for me to have my nephew and you under the same roof together. I have the greatest reliance on his discretion; I wish I could say the same of yours. You shall receive, as is your due, a month's wage, because you leave to suit me.

convenience. There is an excellent Refuge for domestics and governesses out of place at Bath, to which I subscribe, and you can go there till you hear of a situation.'

'Thank you, Miss Otterbourne, but I shall not stay in Bath.'

'Will you go back to Hanford?

Josephine shook her head.

'I am sorry—I am sincerely sorry. There is so much good about you, so much that I have liked; but, under the circumstances, I cannot retain you. It would not be right; and in this house—from myself down, I believe, to the scullery-maid and the boy who cleans the knives—I trust we all try to do that which is right. Mr. Vickary is a burning and a shining light, and Mrs. Grundy, hardly less so—a moon beside the sun. But I will not speak of this. I never dismiss a servant except for some gross offence—and I really do not believe such has occurred—without some little testimonial of my regard; so you must allow me to present you with a five-pound note in addition to your wage. You have been guilty of an indiscretion—I firmly trust, unpremeditated.'

'O Miss Otterbourne!'

'Where do you purpose going?' asked the old lady. 'I cannot possibly permit you to depart without some knowledge that you are going to a place where you will be cared for.'

'I am going'—Josephine looked down, then up—'yes, I am going down into Cornwall.'

'Into Cornwall! Where to?'

'To my husband.'

'Cable—what? Husband! I do not understand.'

'To my husband, madam.'

'You are a married woman?'

Josephine bowed.

'Goodness gracious me!—But that somewhat alters the complexion of affairs. A married woman! Does my nephew know that?'

Josephine bowed again.

'A married woman!—But where is your wedding-ring?'

'In my bosom.'

Miss Otterbourne fanned herself fastly, not with wrath, but with the agitation occasioned by amazement. 'Merciful powers!—you married! Who would have thought it! And so young, and so pretty! It hardly seems possible. But—if you are married—it is not so dreadfully improper that you

should know men have feet under their boots. I do not say it is right; but it is not so very wrong that—that you should have seen a hole in my nephew's stocking, because married women do know that such things occur.'

Josephine smiled; she thought Miss Otterbourne was about to retract her discharge, so she said: 'Madam, I cannot stay here. I have explained my reasons to Captain Sellwood, who will tell you after I am gone. Now I have made my resolve, I go direct to my husband.'

The door of the drawing-room opened and the butler came in. He advanced deferentially towards Miss Otterbourne, and stood awaiting her permission to speak.

'What is it, Vickary? Do you want anything?'

'It is Cable, madam.'

'Well—what of Cable, Vickary?'

'Please, madam, Cable's husband have come to fetch her away.'

CHAPTER XLVIII.

A REPETITION.

One Sunday when Richard Cable was at home after he and his children and mother had dined, he said: 'Now, my dears, we will all go out and walk together, and see the place where my new house shall stand with seven red windows.'

Then the little maids had their straw hats, trimmed with blue ribbons, put on, and their pinafores taken off, and they marched forth with their father on the road towards Rosscarrock. It was winter, but mild and warm; and the sun shone; red beech and oak leaves lay thick in the furrows and sides of the road, and under the ash-trees the way was strewn as with scraps of black string. The leaves had rotted, leaving the mid-ribs bare. The starlings were about in droves, holding parliament, or church, or gossiping parties. The holly grown to trees in the hedges and woods, was covered in the hedges with scarlet berries; but bare of fruit in the wood where the shadow of the oaks and beech had interfered with the setting of the flower.

When Cable came to the coveted spot, whom should he see but Farmer Tregurtha! In fact, from his house, Tre

gurtha had heard the chattering of the little voices in the clear air, just like the chattering of the starlings, and some one had said to him: 'Uncle Dick be coming along wi' all his maidens.' Then Tregurtha had walked across the fields to meet him.

Among the Cornish, any old man, or man past the middle age, is entitled Uncle. Now, Richard had not attained the middle point of life; but the St. Kerian folk did not know his age, and thought him older than he really was, partly because he had so large a family, but chiefly because his trouble and his gloomy temper had given a look of age beyond his years.

Things had not gone well with Tregurtha. He had been engaged in a long lawsuit with Farmer Hamlyn about a right of way, and had lost, it was whispered, several hundreds of pounds, because he was so obstinate that he carried his case by appeal from court to court. Cable knew this very well, and would not have been the Cable he had become if unready to profit by it.

'Hulloh, uncle!' called Tregurtha. 'Glad to see you home again, and in the midst of your stars, as the sun among the seven planets.—Ah! folks always say that children bring luck, and a seventh maid is born with hands that scatter gold. Luck has hopped off my shoulders and lighted on yours.—Have you still a fancy for Summerleaze?'

'Where law is handled, luck leaks out,' answered Richard Cable. 'Come into the road, and we'll have a word together.' Then he bade the seven little girls hold hands and walk on beyond earshot.

They were some time together; but before they parted, Cable had agreed to purchase Summerleaze and to give for it a hundred and fifty pounds. Tregurtha was glad to get that price for it. Thus it was that the land became Cable's, and the first step was taken towards the fulfilment of his dream and the realisation of his ambitious scheme. But he was not yet prepared to build; for that he needed more money.

Once again he was at Bewdley, and he went there with the determination of seeing Josephine, without allowing her to see him; but when he was there, some indistinct feeling held him back, and he went away without having caught sight of her; but he had made inquiries concerning her of his landlady, Mrs. Stokes, without appearing to interest himself especially about her. No sooner was he away, with his face

turned homewards, than he regretted his lack of courage, and made a fresh resolve to see her.

And now that he was possessed of land, he became more eager after money and more adventurous in his speculations. He was never at rest. He denied himself the supreme pleasure life had for him—the pleasure of being at home with his children. He travelled over the north of Cornwall, from Bodmin and Camelford to Stratton, and through the poor land from the Tamar to Holsworthy and Hatherleigh, buying stock and sending it off. He purchased all the calves he could in the dairy country and sold them to the stock-rearing farmers, and the money was never idle in his pocket; he turned it and turned it, and it multiplied in his hands.

Then Cable went to Mr. Spry, the mason, and ordered him to build the house. 'I will have it a long house,' he said. 'The ground rises so sharp behind, that it cannot be more than one room deep, and so I will have seven red windows upstairs—three on one side and three on the other, and two below to right and two to left and two shams, and over the door in the middle a window. That will make seven windows in the front upstairs and four below; and on one side of the door shall be the dwelling part for me and my children; and on the other side of the door shall be the kitchen and back-kitchen; and there shall be a great sort of lobby and hall in the middle, where the children can romp of a rainy day; and because the land falls away so rapidly in front, there must be a flight of stone steps up to the main entrance.'

When this was settled, away went Richard Cable again, and now he went to Bewdley, and as he travelled he thought: 'I should like *her* to see my land and my house that I am building, and how I am going to make myself a gentleman, and all my maidens to be ladies, with no help from her, all out of my own work with my head and hands.'

In this frame of mind he arrived at Bewdley, but without having come to a decision whether he would see her or not. Perhaps, some day, when Red Windows was finished, he would have a large photograph taken of it, with the colours put in, green for the trees, and red for the windows, and send it to her by post. When she saw the picture and read under it, 'Red Windows, the property of Mr. Richard Cable,' then she would learn how great and rich a man he had become, and how he throve when separated from her.

He was at the Bewdley tavern again, and he looked at Mary Stokes, and told her mother that the girl was growing into a fine little woman. 'Down in the west where I am,' said he, 'there are no girls, only maidens. If you speak of a girl, they either don't know what you mean, or think you mean something insulting. I suppose, now, in a little while you'll be thinking of getting Mary a situation in the great house? What will she take to?—housemaids' work or the kitchen? The nursery is out of the question where a baby's voice has not been heard for over half a century.'

Mrs. Stokes shook her head. 'No, Mr. Cable, my little girl don't go there.'

'But why not? You're a tenant under the lady.'

'I shouldn't wish it,' said Mrs. Stokes, mysteriously. 'I don't mind saying as much to you, as you're a stranger, and can't or wouldn't hurt me with Mr. Vickary or the old lady—but, I can't afford to send my Mary there.'

'Can't afford! Is it like an appointment in the army, more cost than gain?'

Mrs. Stokes again shook her head. 'You see, Mr. Cable, things in that house ain't as they ought to be; and I wouldn't have my child there not for a score of pounds. The old lady, she's good and innocent, and thinks she'll make all the world about her into Christians; but, Lord love you! that house is not a Christian household outside of her sitting-room.'

'What do you mean?' asked Richard, uneasily working on his chair.

'I don't mind saying it before you, because you're a stranger, and wouldn't hurt a fly, let alone me; but Mr. Vickary is a bad lot, and he leads the old madam by the nose. Bless you! if it was only picking and stealing, I'd shut my mouth and say nothing, for what is riches given to some for, but that those who haven't may help themselves out of their abundance? But'—she began to scrub the table—'there be things go on there, or is said to go on, that would make decent mothers shy of sending their servants into that house.'

Richard's face became red as blood, and his hair bristled on his head. If Mrs. Stokes had looked at him instead of looking at the table she was scouring, she would have been startled by his face.

'Lord, Mr. Cable, when you come to think of it, it is wonderful what a lot of evil is done in the world by them as intend to do good—I do in truth believe, more than by the

out-and-out wicked ones. And I take it the reason is, your well-intending people begin their bettering of others by taking leave of common-sense themselves.—There comes Mr. Polkinghorn; don't say nothing of all this to him.'

'How do you do, Mr. Cable? How are we, Mrs. Stokes?' asked the pleasant footman entering, rubbing his hands. 'A little frosty to-night. I shall be glad of brandy-and-water hot, please, and sugar.—How go the calves in the van, sir, and the kids at home?'

'And how is my namesake, Mr. Polkinghorn?'

'Oh, the lovely Cable!' He shrugged his shoulders. 'I don't think she'll be much longer with us.'

'What—dying?' The colour deserted Richard's brow.

'O dear, no! Very far from that—a little too much alive—that is all.'

'I do not take your meaning, Mr. Polkinghorn.'

'I have a tendency to cloudiness,' answered the flunky. 'I have generally been thought a wag.—Thank you, Mrs. Stokes. This is real cognac, I hope, and the water boiling?' Having been satisfied on this score, Mr. Polkinghorn poured himself out a stiff glass. 'The cold settles in the stomach, Mr. Cable,' he explained.

'What about my namesake?' again asked Richard, whose face was serious, and who sat with his hand to his head, looking across the table at the footman.

'Oh, as to Miss C.—we'll use initials, and that obviates the chance of giving offence—she's a high-flyer.'

'She is proud and disdainful, you mean?'

'That she is. But that is not what I allude to.' He took a pipe and filled it with tobacco. 'You see, my dear sir, we've had our captain staying with us.'

'Who is your captain?'

'The old woman's nephew, Captain Sellwood.'

Cable's fingers twitched; the nails went into his brow.

'I don't myself give credence to all I hear; but there's a talk that the lovely C. is setting her cap at the captain. That's a pun, you will understand.'

Cable did not laugh.

The flunky explained: 'I'm a joker.—I don't pretend to say where fact ends and fiction begins,' Mr. Polkinghorn went on to say, 'because what I have heard has come from the lips of old V., and old Mr. V. can colour matters to suit himself, just as a blancmange can be made pink with a drop of cochi-

neal; or, if you prefer another similitude, he can flavour his facts to his taste, as you can any pudding with ratafia or vanilla. There must be something to go upon, or you can't colour or flavour at all. That stands to reason.—Are you particularly interested in Miss Cable?'

'She bears my name,' said Richard sternly.

'Ah, quite so! I understand the feeling. I myself could not endure the thought of a Polkinghorn doing a dirty act; but—I don't believe a Polkinghorn could so demean himself—the name would hold him up.'

'What is the fact, coloured or clear?'

'Oh, I can't say. V. will have it that Miss C. has been carrying it on with the captain, and there has been a rumpus accordingly; and the old woman has had to interfere, and—I do not believe that she will let the beautiful and fascinating C. remain much longer with us—that is what V. says; but V. has never taken warmly to the C.; she has been short with him.'

Then Cable stood up, and without another word, went out of the inn—he went out, forgetful that he had not his hat upon his head, and he walked hastily in the direction of Bewdley Manor.

How wonderful is man's life! It turns about like a wheel, and he does those things to-day which he did some time agone. But no—not those things exactly. They differ in particulars, but in direction they are the same. His life moves in spirals, ever reverting to where it ran before, but never quite going over the same ground. On one memorable evening Josephine had been in Brentwood Hall, and Richard had run to bring her thence, hatless, coatless, breathless. Now he went, by night, to another great house, also through a park, hatless, breathless, but not on this occasion coatless—there was the difference. On that former occasion, Josephine was the most honoured guest in the great house; now she was the least esteemed servant in this great house.

For many thousands of years men believed that storms blew over their heads, tearing up trees, unroofing houses, flashing with electric bolts, pursuing a direct course. They held that storms never swerved to one side or the other till they had expended their violence. Now we are told that no storm travels thus—they all move in a rotary course; they whirl across the earth and sea like aerial spinning-tops. We have supposed, and we still suppose, that men go straight

courses from birth to death; but is it so? Is not the spirit of man a blast of the Great Spirit that sweeps along through life in a succession of revolutions? Do we not find, when we look back at our own past history, that we do again and yet again the same things—that again and yet again we drive in the same direction one day, and in the opposite on the morrow? I myself, when I shut my eyes and hold my face in my hands, can hear the spirit within me whirling and humming, and eager to sweep me away into some folly that I committed a few months ago, and vowed then I would never commit again.

We think the same thoughts, as we speak the same words, and, alas, tell the same old stories, and crack the same old jokes, day after day, in our little teetotum spin. What an amount of impetus there is in our movement! what a whir, what a hum we make!—but what a little movement forward in the straight line there is for the vast amount of rotary hurry and noise! On this evening, Richard Cable was doing very much the same thing he had done on another evening, the memory of which still scorched his brain; and he was doing that which he had resolved never to do again. He did it with a difference. We all do our little rounds with a difference. He went this time with his coat on his back; but he was as hot, and as agitated, and as breathless as before.

See what an advance the man had made! He went in his coat; though, I grant, he went this time in his coat chiefly because he had his coat on his back when the impulse started him to go. Still this was an advance, a distinct advance.

Richard Cable stood still when he came to the house. He tried to collect his thoughts and resolve what to do. But the dog in the backyard began to bark furiously, and its bark distracted him; he could not gather his ideas. He knew that Josephine was in a place which she could not remain in without some taint adhering to her. She was under the same roof with the man who had loved her and had proposed to her; a man of her own class, a man whom she had known for long. Richard put from him at once the thought that she was, what the footman said, consciously 'making up to' the captain; but he was by no means sure that unconsciously she might be drawn towards him.

On that other evening when he had run to Brentwood, he had been unable to gather his thoughts; but he had seen

clearly one thing—that his wife ought to be with him in his great trouble; so now, his mind was confused, yet one idea shone out clear through the fog of thoughts—that his wife must not be allowed to remain another night in Bewdley Manor. On that other evening, he thought of himself; on this, he thought of her. Then, he it was who needed a stay; now, it was not he, but she. So, with this one idea fixed in his mind, with his ears full of the noise of the dog-barking, and with the throb of the blood in the pulses in his ears, he went into the house. But how he encountered the butler, and where and how he made known what he needed, and how he was brought upstairs and confronted with Josephine and Miss Otterbourne in the great state drawing-room, that he never was able to remember distinctly. He saw everything about him through a haze, as though smoke were rising, or the carpet steamed like a ploughed field in the morning sun. He saw his wife, but she seemed to him as afar off—as if he saw her through a glass. He made no effort to collect his thoughts; he formed no resolution as to the course he would pursue, but he said: 'I have come for my wife. Give her up to me. This is no place for her. I insist on her coming with me—at once—wherever I choose to take her.'

Then Josephine said: 'Richard—I will follow you wherever you go.'

CHAPTER XLIX.

A DROPPED 'S.'

Richard Cable wheeling a barrow that he had borrowed from the stables, laden with Josephine's box, went out of the grounds of Bewdley Manor, and Josephine walked at his side.

'Richard,' she said, 'how comes it that you are lame?'

'You have lamed me.'

'Richard,' she said, 'how oldened you are.'

'You have oldened me.'

'And bent.'

'You have bowed my back.'

'Do not speak unkindly to me,' she pleaded. 'I know I have done wrong, and am sorry for it.'

'When you break china, can you mend it that the cracks do not show and that it will hold as before?'

She did not answer this question.

'And man's heart, when it is broken, can it be patched up? If you pour love into it again, does not the love run out at all sides and leave the vessel dry?'

'You do not forgive me, Richard?'

'I do not—I cannot.'

'Then why have you come for me now?'

'Because you bear my name, and, to my woe, are my wife, and—I would not have you there, where a stain may come on the name, and where my wife may be—nay, is, lightly spoken of. Mind you,' continued Cable, bending between the handles of the barrow, 'I do not mistrust your conduct. Though he is there under the same roof with you who loved you, and perhaps loves you still, I have no doubt about your conduct. God spare me that! I know you to be proud and cruel, but I know also that you are not light. You have brought me down, but not to such baseness as to think that.'

'I thank you for that, Richard, at all events for that.—Where am I going now? What will you do with me?'

'You are going now to the inn, to Mrs. Stokes. Where you go next, what I do with you after this night, I cannot tell; you shall know to-morrow. My head is like the old lightship in a chopping sea.'

As soon as they reached the tavern, Richard brought Josephine in, and said to the landlady: 'This is my wife; take her in for the night; give her my room. I am going out, and shall not be back before morning. If she needs anything, let her have it, and stint her not.' He said no farewell to Josephine, but went out at the door, wiping his brow on his sleeve.

He walked by the river. He had not got his stick, and he cut himself one from the hedge; and as the night was dark and he had to grope among them for a suitable stick, he tore his hands, and they were covered with blood, and when he wiped his brow the smears came on his face. He obtained a good stout stick at last on which he could lean, and he stood resting on it by the river, looking over the slowly flowing water to the dark horizon, and the red glare in the sky beyond over Bath.

The season was autumn, the time when, at the rising of the sun, the whole face of a field and every hedge are seen to

be covered with cobwebs strung with dew. And now, in the night, the air was full of these cobwebs; one might have thought they were spun in heaven, and came down charged with water. They drifted in the light air, and the dew that rose settled on the minute fibres and weighed them down, that they came leisurely down—down through the raw night-air. They settled over Richard's head—they fell on his face—they came on his hands, and he was forced to brush them away, because they teased him. There were other cobwebs, in his brain, confusing, teasing that, charged also with drops, bitter and salt; but these he could not sweep away—he thrust them aside, and they spread again; he squeezed them together and wrung out the brine and gall, and they unfurled and fell again over his brain. They obscured his sight of the future; they troubled his thought of the present; and they all rose, thick, teasing, even torturing, out of the past; and all the myriad threads went back to one root—Josephine. But as in a web there are fibres and cross-fibres, so was it with this inner cobweb—there were some revengeful and others pitiful; some hard and others soft; some of hate and some of love; yet by night, as he stood by the water, striking now with his hand, then with his stick, at the falling cobwebs, he could not distinguish one thread from another; so one feeling was interlaced and intertangled with another, that they were not to be unravelled.

There still lurked in his mind that fear of Josephine which he had first entertained when he saw her on the stranded lightship and heard her sing the Mermaid's song; that fear which his mother had detected in him when he lay crippled at the 'Magpie,' and which she at once brought back to its true source—love. Richard Cable did not know that there remained any trace of his old love there; he thought that all his feeling for Josephine was anger and resentment; but he was not a man given to self-analysis. He was aware of the ever-presence of pain in his soul, and he knew who had hurt him, but hardly the nature of that pain. We carry about with us for many years, may be, a something in us that never allows us to forget that all is not well—a spasm of the heart, a gnawing pain in the chest, a shooting-needle in the brain, a racking cough, and we do not consult a physician: we may soon outgrow it; it came on after an overstrain, a chill, and a long rest will recover us of it. What it is, we do not know; we generally attribute it to a wrong cause, and regard it as

that which it is not. It is so also with our mental aches—we have them; we go on enduring them, and often wholly misinterpret them. Richard supposed that he had acted out of regard for his own name, that the fever and alarm he had felt was occasioned by no other dread; but when he sprang up from Mrs. Stokes' table and hurried to the manor-house to fetch away Josephine, he had not thought about the preservation of the name of Cable from a slur, only of her—of her in bad moral surroundings, of her exposed to slights, and perhaps temptations. On this night, the sight of her in her quiet servant's dress, with her face pale, the eyes deep, the lines of her countenance sharp drawn, had strangely affected him. He thought that it had roused in him his full fierceness of resentment for wrong done; but he was mistaken—the deepest bell in the rugged belfry of his heart had never ceased thrilling from the first stroke dealt it; and now it was touched again by the sight of her face and the sound of her voice, and the whole mass quivered with its renewed vibrations. Though the dew fell heavily, Richard Cable did not feel the moisture; and though there was frost, he was not cold. The night was long, but he was unaware of its length.

He did not return to the inn till morning, and then he had formed a plan, and he had gained the mastery over himself. Early though the hour was when he arrived, he found Josephine already down. Contrary to his former frank ways, he did not look her full in the face; he felt his weakness and would not venture to do so. He spoke to her only when necessary, and with restraint in his tone. The voice was hard and his face drawn and cold.

'I truck my young calves to Exeter,' he said. 'We will go thither by train. After that, you will have to come the rest of the way in my conveyance, unless you prefer the coach.'

'No,' answered Josephine; 'I will go with you.'

He drew a weary breath; he would have preferred to send her by the coach. The oppressiveness of a journey with her was not to be contemplated with composure.

'Then,' said he, 'we will start at once; that is, when I have got my calves in truck. The train is at ten-fifteen. You will be at the station. I will speak to a man to fetch your box, and I will pay him. Have it ready labelled for the Clarendon Hotel at Exeter.'

'The Clarendon! Is that where you stay when there?'

'The Clarendon is where you shall be. You will be well cared for there; it is a good hotel, the best in Exeter; it looks out on the close, and is very respectable.'

'Shall you be there, Richard?'

'No; I go elsewhere. Calves are not taken in at first-class hotels.'

'But I had rather, a thousand times rather, be with you.'

'I have my calves to suckle. I must go where I am accustomed to go, and where I can get milk for them.'

'But why should I not go there too? I will help you with your calves.'

He laughed harshly. 'You are a lady.'

'I am a servant-girl out of place,' she said with a faint smile.

'They drink and swear and curse and fight, where I go,' he growled.

'No, Richard—you go to no place that is bad. Where you go, I will go also.'

He did not look in her face; he could hardly have resisted the appeal, had he done so, her face was so full of earnestness, so pale and anxious, so humble, and the eyes so full of tears. Perhaps he knew that he could not resist, were he to meet her eyes, so he kept his own averted. But the tones of her voice thrilled him, and made his head spin. He bit the end of his whip, with his brows knitted. He knew her great eyes, those lovely eyes that went through him when he met them, were fixed on him; but he would not turn towards them; his face became more frozen and drawn.

'You,' he said—by her Christian name he would not call her—'you—understand me. I am not Richard to you. You must speak of me and address me as Mr. Cable.'

'But—I am your wife.'

'No,' he said; 'that is all past and for ever done with. For a little while, and then the tie was torn away by yourself. You are coming with me into Cornwall, to St. Kerian. There you will live as you like. If you want money, you shall have it; but you shall not live there as my wife, but as Miss Cornellis, or by any other name you like to assume. My mother will see you want nothing; you shall not live in my house; you will be a stranger there; but my mother—and I, yes, and I, will know how you are, what you do, and that you do not again fall into evil company, and run the risk of——'

'Of what? I ran no risk.'

'No,' he said; 'you ran no risk. No. You are proud, proud as Satan; and yet Satan, for all his pride, fell.'

The tears which had formed in her eyes rolled over her cheeks. The disappointment was very great. She had hoped that he was going to take her back to himself. 'You need have no fear for me,' she said in a voice half choked with her tears; 'I have that in me which will always hold me true and upright. Not pride; O no, not pride—that is broken long ago, ever since I found I had driven you away.'

'What is it?' Still he did not look at her, but he turned his ear attentively towards her. She might have seen, had not her eyes been so dim with salt, that a nerve down the side of his face from the temple was twitching.

'It is, that I love you,' she answered in a low, faint voice, but little above a whisper.

Then he stamped on the sanded floor of the village inn parlour, and clenched his hands, and stood up, and shook himself, like a great hairy dog when it leaves the water. 'Ha, ha!' he laughed; 'as of old, to patronise and play with, and then break to pieces, as a child loves its doll. I will have none of your love. I have tasted it, and it is sour.'

'Richard!'

He struck the table. 'I am not Richard—to you. That is part of your grand condescending ways. You shall call me Mr. Cable. Who knows!—in time you may come to look up to me, when I am rich and esteemed. Mr. Cable of Red Windows, Esquire.' Then he went forth tossing his shoulders, and he put on his hat in a hot and impatient way.

A struggle ensued in Josephine's bosom. It was hard for her to go down into a strange country and there live, in the same village with her husband, without being acknowledged by him, divided by all England from her own friends. He was asking too much of her, putting her through too sharp an ordeal; and yet, after a little boil up of her old pride and wilfulness, she bent to his decision. It was not for her to rebel. She had wrought the disunion that subsisted between them; she had made the great change in him; and she must submit, and suffer and wait, till he took her back. She must accept his terms, not impose terms of her own.

She was at the station at the time appointed, and Richard handed her a second-class ticket to Exeter. He travelled in the van with his calves, and she saw nothing of him till their arrival. Then he came to the carriage door, called a cab,

shouldered her box himself, and limped with it to the carriage. 'To the Clarendon,' he said, shut the door, and climbed on the box.

On reaching the inn, an old-fashioned Lotel, looking out on the close with its great trees and gray cathedral, he descended, let her out of the cab, and preceding her, ordered the waiter to let her have a room. 'The lady—she is, mind you, a real lady—she must have a good room, and a capital supper, and a fire, and be made comfortable.—Don't you stare at me as if I had aught of concern with her. I'm a common man, a cattle-jobber; but I'm charged to see after her, and that she be well attended to, as a real well-born lady, full of education and high-class manners. As for me, I put up elsewhere—at the "Goat and Compasses," down by the iron bridge. I'll come in the morning and fetch her away. It is my duty, set me by them as are responsible for her, to see that she be cared for and made comfortable.' Then he went away.

Josephine was given a well-furnished bedroom, with a large window, looking out on the elms and grass and old towers. Her box was in the room; and she opened it, and drew from it some little things she needed. Then she bathed her face, and seated herself by the window, looking out into the quiet close. The bells of the cathedral were ringing for afternoon service, deep-toned musical bells. The autumn had touched the leaves and turned them. The swallows were clustering on the gray lead roof of the minster, arranging for migration. There was coolness in the air; but it was not too chilly for Josephine to sit at the open window, looking at the trees and listening to the bells. She felt very lonely, more lonely than at Bewdley. There she had the association with old Miss Otterbourne to take off the edge of her sense of solitude; but now she had no one. She was with her husband, yet far removed from him. She was associated with him without association. It was better to be separated altogether, than to be in his presence daily without reciprocation. She drew her wedding-ring from her bosom and looked at it. The night before she had put it on, and had hesitated whether to wear it again; but had rehung it round her neck, determined to wait another day and see what her husband's wishes and intentions and behaviour to her were, before she did so. And now, as she looked sorrowfully at the golden hoop, she knew that it must continue to hang as before; he had forbidden her to acknowledge her tie to him and to wear his name.

How strange is the perversity of the human heart! She had married Richard without loving him; and now that she had lost him, she loved him. Her love had started up out of her anguish over her wrong done him. He had loved her when she had only highly esteemed him; and now she loved him when he despised her.

She knelt by her box, and looked over her little treasures. They were few. Her bullfinch she had not brought away; she had given it to the housemaid who had cleaned her room. She turned over her few clothes in the box and unfolded Richard's blue handkerchief. In a cardboard box was the bunch of everlastings. They were now very dry, but they retained their shape and colour. 'Everlastings!' she said, and recalled the night in the deserted cottage, when she asked the rector whether he was looking up at the everlastings. 'To the Everlasting,' he had answered, and she had not understood him; but she remembered the scene and the words he had used.

The cathedral bells had ceased, and across the close came the sounds of music—the roll of the organ and the voices of the choir. Josephine closed her box and locked it, and went back to the window and listened to the soothing strains. Then, drawn as by an irresistible attraction, she went downstairs, and crossed the close, and entered the side door of the cathedral. She did not go far; she made no attempt to enter the choir, but seated herself in the aisle on the stone seat that ran along the wall. The evening light shone through the great west window, and filled the upper portion of the nave with a soft yellow glow. Below were the gray pillars and cool gray shadow. There were few loungers in the nave, and she was quite unnoticed. Her love of music made her always susceptible to its influence. The effect of the sacred music in the great Gothic minster on Josephine, in her then state of depression, was great: it soothed her mind; it was like breath on a wound, lulling the pain and cooling the fever.

For long there had been in Josephine a craving for help, for something, or rather some one whom she could lay hold of and lean on. It was this want in her which had driven her to take Richard Cable, in defiance of her father's wishes and of the opinion of the world. Richard had failed her; and she had cast herself into a sphere in which she was as solitary and lacking assistance as much as in that she had occupied

before. And now, once again, she was torn out of that sphere, and was about to be cast—she knew not where, among —she knew not what companions—and again she was without support.

She sat with her head bowed and her hands clasping her bosom, listening to the music. Her soul was bruised and aching, like the body that has been jolted and beaten. But the hurt body is cast on a bed and sleeps away its pains. Where is the bed of repose on which the weary suffering spirit can stretch itself and be recruited? Josephine was not thinking at all; she was feeling, conscious of want and weariness, of a void and pain. The aisle in which she was, was on the north side of the church; and quite in shadow, only in the beautiful vault of the nave, with its reed-like spreading ribs, hung a halo of golden haze; and in that golden haze the sweet music seemed to thrill and throb, and send down waves of aerial balm.

The pain in Josephine's heart became more acute, and she bent on one side and rested her elbow on the stone seat and put her hand to her heart and breathed laboriously. The attitude gave her some ease; and as she half reclined thus, the waves of golden light and angelic music swept over her, softly, gently, as the warm sea-waves used to glide in over the low Essex coast. Presently, Josephine slid down on her knees and laid her head on the cold stone seat. Then only did the meaning of the rector come clear to her, when he dropped an *s* as she spoke of the everlastings, and he answered her, that he looked to the Everlasting.

CHAPTER L.

BOOTS AGAIN.

Next morning, Josephine found a cab awaiting her. Cable had paid her bill and sent the conveyance for her. He had given instructions to the driver to convey her along the Okehampton and Launceston road beyond the town to a point where, at the head of the first hill, stood a fragment of an old stone cross. She had fancied that he would have come with his van of calves into the cathedral yard, drawn up before the

Clarendon Hotel, and had her box laden on the van there; but Richard Cable had too much delicacy under his roughness of manner to subject her to such a humiliation; she was to leave the Clarendon as she had come to it, in a hired conveyance, and as a lady; only when beyond the town would he receive her box and her on his van

She reached the cross before him, and dismounted. When she opened her purse, the driver objected—he had already received his fare. The man who had ordered him had paid. Josephine had her box placed by the side of the road. A little inn stood near the cross, and the landlady good-naturedly asked her to step in—if she were waiting for the coach. 'No charge, miss; you needn't take anything.'

'Thank you,' said Josephine modestly; 'you are very kind; but I am not going by the coach. A gentleman—I mean a man who drives a van of calves, is going to pick me up.'

'Oh, you mean Dicky Cable. He often goes by our way.'

'Yes; I am going on with Mr. Cable.' As she spoke, she saw the cob, and Cable limping at its side, ascending the red road cut between banks of red sandstone hung with ferns and overarched with rich limes.

'He looks very greatly changed,' said Josephine to herself —'oldened, hardened, and somewhat lame.'

Presently he came up. Rain had fallen in the night, and the red mud was splashed about his boots and the wheels of the van. The calves within put their noses between the bars and lowed; they were frightened by the motion of the vehicle; but they were not hungry, for they had been fed by Cable before starting. He scarcely said good-morning to Josephine; it was mumbled, but he touched his hat to her. Then he shouldered her travelling-box and put it on the top of the van. This van consisted of a sort of pen or cage on wheels; the sides and top were constructed like a cage, with bars of wood, and between the bars the air got to the calves, and the calves were visible. There was a seat in front, and the door into the pen was behind—it let down so as to form an inclined plane, up and down which the calves could walk, when driven into or out of the cage.

How was Josephine to be accommodated in such a contrivance? Was she to go into the cage among the calves, or to be slung under the conveyance between the wheels, or to be perched on the top, as in an omnibus? Richard pointed with his whip to the driver's seat.

'Am I to sit there?' she asked.—He nodded.

'Then where do you sit?'

He got upon the shaft, as a carter perches himself.

'I do not like to take your place,' said Josephine. 'You will be very uncomfortable there.'

'It is not the first time you have made me uncomfortable. Sit where I have put you. I must be off every few minutes when we come to a hill; then I walk.'

That was—he limped. His thigh was well, but he never could walk with it as formerly. It gave him no pain, and his movements were not ungainly, but there was a decided limp as he walked.

He was not in a mood for conversation. Josephine could touch him as he sat at her feet on the shaft with his back to her. He did not once look round; he went about his work, driving, walking, attending to the calves, as if he were quite alone. Nevertheless, he must have thought of her, for when he came to a piece of road newly stoned, he went leisurely, and glanced furtively behind—not at her face—to see that the jolting did not hurt her; and when a shower came on, without a word he threw his waterproof coat over her knees. Presently they came to a long ascent. He got down and walked. She also descended and walked on the other side from him. She wondered whether his silence would continue the whole way, whether he would relax his sternness.

The journey was tedious; the cob travelled slowly, and the stoppages were long, whilst farmers haggled with Richard over the price of the calves. The sale of these latter did not, however, begin till the road left the red sandstone and approached Dartmoor. The yeomen and farmers in proximity to the moor were a thriving race; they could send any number of young cattle to run on the moor at a nominal fee to the 'moormen'—that is, to certain fellows who had the privilege to guard the vast waste of rock and down, of mountain and valley, under the Prince of Wales as Duke of Cornwall; for Dartmoor forest is duchy property though situated in Devon, and indeed occupying its heart. To the present day, it is about the borders of the moor that the old yeoman is still to be found, occupying in many cases his ancestral farm, the buildings of which date back three or four hundred years. They consist of a large quadrangle; one side is occupied by the dwelling-house, that looks into the yard, but is divided from it by a small raised garden. The major portion

of the yard or court is a pen for the half-wild cattle driven in from the moor; and about it are the stables and cow-houses, the 'shippen,' and the 'linneys'—the 'shippen' for sheep, and the 'linneys' for wagons and carts and the farmer's gig.

The worst seasons do not affect the yeomen round the moor; they must thrive, when they have free run for any number of sheep and cattle and horses over the downs, where the grass is always sweet, the water pure, and where disease never makes its appearance. All they have to concern themselves about is a supply of winter-food for the stock. Elsewhere, the depression in agriculture, the repeal of the corn-laws, killed off the yeomen; only on the moor fringes do they thrive to this day as sturdy, as well-to-do, and as independent, and, it must be added, as delighting in law as of old. Dartmoor lay on the south and east, and the cold clay land of North Devon on the west; land also, as already said, that is excellent running and rearing ground for young cattle. Consequently, Richard Cable, as soon as he reached the frontiers of these two poor lands—one peat, and the other clay—found buyers, but not buyers who were ready to part with their money without a haggle over coppers.

It was not Richard who went after the farmers with his goods, as a chapman goes about among farmhouses with his wares; but the yeomen and farmers came to him. But when they came, they made poor pretences that they had chanced on him when bound elsewhere, or were at the tavern for some other purpose. The times of Richard's arrival were pretty well known. The van travelled slower than the news, as the thunder rolls after the flash. The men who came after calves were all alike in this—they had very red faces, and all filled their clothes to overflow. They had all loud and cheery voices, and a breezy good-humour not unmixed with bluster, bred of the consciousness that their pockets were well lined, and that they were petty lords on their own domains. In one thing, they, moreover, were all deficient—in the knowledge of the value of time. Josephine looked on with wonder at the business Richard did and at the way in which it was done. The scenery was lovely, so lovely that she enjoyed it in spite of the trouble in which she was. The ranges of tors, or granite peaks of the moor, its wildness and barrenness, contrasted with the richness of the country at its feet; now clothed in the many-tinted garment of autumn, gray desolation towering above pillowy woods of gold and amber, of copper

and of green. What could be more beautiful? In her present weariness of expectation and disappointment, she longed to fly to the recesses of the moor, build herself a cell there of lichened granite stones, and there spend the rest of her days away from the sight and sounds of men.

At noon on the first day, the van halted at a small wayside inn, and Richard ordered dinner. 'There is but ham and eggs,' he said. 'Your ladyship must put up with that to-day. The ale is bad, but you shall have tolerable ginger-beer.'

The night was spent at an old coaching-inn, a large, rambling place with vast stables. There she was treated to an excellent supper and to the best of rooms; but Richard did not sup with her, or indeed see her after their arrival at the inn.

Next morning he paid the account, and they started on their further course. Her boots had been well cleaned; not so those of Cable, which still bore the red mud splashes that had come on them when they were in the sandstone district.

It was now clear to Josephine that Richard would not agree to a reconciliation; she must abandon the hopes she had entertained that he would unbend and yield. She also had made up her mind; and when they came to a hill, up which both walked, she went to him on his side of the horse. 'Mr. Cable,' she said, 'you are at once kind and cruel. You provide for me very differently than for yourself, and make provision that I shall lack no comfort; but you do not give me a good word, and not a look good or bad.'

'Well,' said he, 'of whom have I learned to be cruel? You were scornful and offensive because I did not in a few weeks acquire your ways; and now I am better, I have learned something—that you have taught me—to be unfeeling and seek my own self-interest.'

'No; I was never either one or the other.'

He laughed contemptuously. 'Not unfeeling!'

'No, Richard—I mean, Mr. Cable—I was thoughtless, but not unfeeling. I was not self-seeking, or I would not have married you.'

'You married me to suit a whim; and when you had me, the whim came to slap me in the face and sneer at my manners.'

She drew a long sigh; there was truth in this, and she did not contradict it.

'But we will not cry over spilt milk and strive to patch up broken eggs. The thing is done and sealed up and stowed away in the lockers of the past.'

'Tell me this, Richard: are you so set against me in your own mind that you will not take me to your side again? Are we never to come nearer each other than as I sit on the box, and you on the shaft, with your back turned to me? Is your face always to look away from me?'

'For ever and for ever. It is your doing.'

'I have trespassed against you, I know; but I suppose to all who trespass, forgiveness is due when sought with tears.'

'No,' he said; 'your trespass was too deep.'

'And I am to be for ever separated from you?'

'For ever.'

'Then—Mr. Cable, if I am not to be regarded as a wife, I will owe you nothing. I have money, and I will pay for my lodging and food at the inns. I will not be indebted to you for anything. What had you determined on for me at St. Kerian?'

'I also have money; I will not let you want. You shall have all you need to live like a lady; you shall have a house and a servant; and you shall have half of all the money I earn, and I earn now a great deal.'

'I will not touch it—no, not a penny of it.'

'You are proud,' he said, scowling—'proud and wilful; headstrong always.'

'And you are proud, Mr. Cable. There is the fortune of Cousin Gabriel Gotham, your father, lying untouched; the rents and dividends are accumulating. You will not have them, and I will not. Yes, you are proud, and I am proud also. I have some spirit left in me, though much is gone. I will live at St. Kerian, as that is your wish; but I will not share your earnings—I will not touch any of it. I will work for my own bread, and not eat that of charity. I have a little money. Good Miss Otterbourne forced a five-pound note on me, and I have saved my wages. I will buy myself a sewing-machine, and live at St. Kerian by my own hands and feet. I suppose there is sufficient vanity among the girls there to make them desire to dress beyond their station; and that the Government schools have done their work effectually in giving them a distaste for doing their own needlework. So there will be an opportunity for me to pick up a livelihood, and to be indebted to none—to you, least of all.'

'Proud,' he muttered—'proud and wayward, as of old. I feed my calves. Why should not I feed you?'

'Because I am not a calf.'

They walked on in silence some way. Josephine's blood was roused. After reaching the top of the hill, before mounting, she said in a less excited and resolute tone: 'Do not call me wrong-headed. I have my self-respect to sustain, and I cannot live on your charity if I may not bear your name.'

Again they drove on some little way—now over a down that commanded a glorious view of rolling land stretching far away to the west and north-west, and of rugged granite peaks; their sides strewn with overturned rocks, divided from each other by clefts, out of which rushed brawling torrents, coffee-coloured with the dye of the peat-bogs out of which they sprung.

When they came to another rise, Josephine dismounted again and walked up the hill beside her husband. The hill was steep, and she walked bent forward, looking at the ground. 'Mr. Cable,' she said, 'at the inn where we spent the night, my boots were cleaned, but not yours.'

'No,' he answered, with a short laugh. 'I was not there as a grand gentleman traveller, but as a plain trading wayfarer. They don't black the boots of such as me.'

'They are plastered with mud of many colours.'

'Does it offend you that your driver has dirty boots, my lady?'

'No, Mr. Cable; but I think it would be pleasanter for yourself, if your boots were cleaned.'

'My boots! I remember what offence they gave you once. They would not take a polish. They were so steeped in oil that they might not come into your ladyship's boudoir! Are you sneering at my boots again?'

'No, Richard; I never sneer now.' She put her delicate hand over her brow and wiped it, and then got up into her place again.

Presently they came to a spring that gushed into a granite trough—a spring of such crystalline brightness, that looking down through the water was like looking through a magnifying glass. There was a button at the bottom of the trough, and one could distinguish the four holes in it.

'This water is very good and fresh; shall I give you some?' asked Richard Cable.

'No,' answered Josephine. 'I will take nothing from you,

not even a cup of cold water. I will help myself. I will take nothing till it is offered in love.'

He looked hastily at her, and saw that her eyes were full of tears. He trembled, and lashed his horse savagely, and uttered something much like an oath. He was angry with the cob—it was going to sleep over its journey; and a horse that goes to sleep whilst walking is liable to fall and cut his knees. Richard Cable detected, or fancied he detected, somnolency in the horse, and he worried it with whip and jerk of rein till he had roused it to full activity and a trot, whereat all the calves began to low and plead not to be so severely shaken; but Cable had no compassion on the calves; he lashed into the horse, and made him run along as he had not run that day or last.

'It is all pride and wilfulness,' he said to himself.

From sitting on the shaft with his legs hanging down, they were much splashed with mud by the horse, as he went through every wet and dirty place in the road; this was especially the case when he was trotting; and Richard, looking down at his boots, saw them caked with mud, layer on layer, or clot on clot; below was the red, then the white mud of the pounded granite, then the brown of loamy land, then black from peat-water, where the road traversed the down.

'They are a bit unsightly,' he said to himself. 'And when I come to Sticklepath, where I put up for the night, I'll mind and have them dried over the fire in the kitchen; and I'll clean them myself in the morning. She's right—one ought to keep one's-self respectable.'

When they reached the place called Sticklepath, a hamlet with an inn, and a chapel whitewashed and thatched with straw, and looking like a cottage, he ordered supper, and then went after his cob, to rub him down with straw. He was careful of his beast, and always attended to his comforts and necessities himself. Then he got milk for the calves; but when he came out into the yard, he found Josephine there with a pan of skimmed milk, dipping in her hand and holding it to the hungry creatures, who opened their pink wet mouths and mumbled her hand till they had sucked off it all the milk.

'How proud she is!' muttered Cable. 'She does this out of wickedness—to pay me for having given her a lift in my van. She will owe me nothing.'

Before he went to bed, he took his boots to the kitchen and asked that they might be put where they would dry before

morning, when he would brush them over himself. He slept soundly that night; and on waking, dressed himself, brushed the mud off the bottoms of his trousers, and then descended in his stocking-soles in quest of his boots. As he came down the back-stairs, he could look into and across the kitchen, and he saw behind it, in the back-shed that served the purpose of boothole and back kitchen, the figure of Josephine. She stood near the door, with the fresh morning light streaming in on her, and white pigeons flying about outside, and perching near the door, expecting the morning largess of crumbs. She had her sleeves turned back, exposing her beautiful arms, and—she was blackening his boots.

CHAPTER LI.

ISHTAR.

Richard Cable reascended the stairs unheard and unseen. He was irritated at what he had observed. 'How proud she is!' he said. 'There is no breaking her stubborn spirit. She does this to pay me for her carriage.'

It is a curious fact that we are prone to note and condemn in others the vice that mars our own selves. We are always keen-sighted with respect to the mote in our brother's eye, especially when it is a chip off the beam in our own eye. I have known a woman, who was a mischief-maker with her tongue throughout a neighbourhood, declare that of all things she abhorred was gossip, and that, therefore, she avoided So-and-so as a scandal-monger. The conceited man turns up his already cocked nose at another prig; and the talker is impatient of the love of chatter in his friend. I once knew two exceedingly talkative men who monopolised the whole conversation at table. The one invited the other to make a walking expedition with him of a month; but they returned in three days. 'I could not stand B,' said A; 'I was stunned with his tongue.'—'I refused to go on with A,' said B; 'he talked me lame.' The girl who sings flat, criticises the lack of tune in a companion; and the man who paints badly is the first to detect the blemishes in another's picture; and I am quite sure my most severe critics will be those who have written the worst novels.

Richard Cable was convinced that Josephine was proud and self-willed; and everything she did, every act of submission, every gentle appeal for forgiveness, was viewed by him through the distorted medium of his own pride. Indistinctly, he perceived that she was asking him to be received back on his terms—that she was ready to make every sacrifice for this end; but he could not or would not believe that she was acting from any other motive than caprice. Her pride was hurt because he had left her, and she sought to recover him, not because she cared for him, certainly not because she would be more considerate of him, but to salve over her wounded self-love.

An uneducated man, when he gets an idea into his head, will not let it go. He hugs it, as the Spartan lad hugged the fox though it bit into his vitals. There is no rotation of crops in his brain. The idea once planted there, grows and spreads, and eats up all the nutriment, and overshadows the whole surface, and allows nothing to grow under it, like the beech, which poisons the soil beneath its shadow with its dead leaves and mast cases. A man who has undergone culture puts into his head one idea, and as soon as it is ripe, reaps and garners it, ploughs up the soil, puts in another of a different nature—never lets his brain be idle, and never gives it up permanently to one idea or set of ideas. Or rather—his head is an allotment garden, in which no single idea occupies the entire field, but every lobe is used for a different crop, precisely as in an allotment every variety of vegetable is grown.

Now, Richard Cable had had the idea of Josephine's haughtiness so ploughed into his mind that he could harbour no other idea. It grew and spread like a weed, and poisoned the soil of his mind, so that no wholesome plants, no sweet herbs could flourish there. It overmastered, it outgrew, it strangled all the fragrant and nutritious plants that once occupied that garden-plot. Its roots ran like those of an ash through every portion, and spread over the entire subsoil, that nothing else could grow there, or could only grow in a stunted and starved condition. So, with singular perversity, Cable resented the conduct of Josephine in cleaning his boots, and he attributed her act to unworthy motives. He said not a word about his boots till the van was in motion, and he started up the steep hill. Then he exclaimed: 'Whatever have these folk at the inn been about with my boots, that they

shine like those of a dancing-master?' Then he went through a puddle, and came out with them tarnished and begrimed. He did not look round at Josephine, who made no remark, but next morning cleaned his boots again. After that, Cable kept them in his bedroom. He would not have them cleaned by Josephine.

All the calves were disposed of before Launceston was reached; and as the load was light, the horse rattled on with the van at a better rate. When they drew near to St. Kerian, Cable said: 'I have written beforehand to my mother, and told her my intentions. She will have arranged lodgings for you, where you may stay on your arrival. After that, as you are wilful, you must suit yourself; but I could not drop you from the van in the street with nowhere to go to. Even the calves are not treated thus; each goes to its allotted cow-house. I have told my mother to engage the lodging as for an acquaintance of hers—acquaintance, understand, not friend—and to pay a month in advance.'

'That,' said Josephine, 'I will not allow.' She opened her purse. 'What has been spent, I will refund.'

'I do not know what the sum is,' said Cable angrily. 'I insist on paying this. Afterwards, pay as you will.'

'I will not allow it,' said Josephine vehemently. 'No; indeed, indeed, I will not. If you choose to acknowledge me then, I will take anything from you, and be thankful for every crumb of bread and drop of water; but if you will not, then I will set my teeth and lips, and not a crumb of bread or drop of water of your providing shall pass between them.'

'Yourself—yourself still; wilful, defiant, proud!' he said, with a frown and a furtive glance at her over his shoulder. Then he shouted rather than spoke: 'Why will you not enjoy the estate and money bequeathed to you? It is yours; no one will dispute it with you.'

'I will not touch it,' answered Josephine, 'because I have no right to it.'

'You have every right: it was left to you.'

'But it ought never to have come to me. It was properly, justly, yours.'

'I will not have it!' shouted Richard. 'You know that. I am too proud to take it.'

'And I also; I am too proud to take it.'

'We are both proud, are we? Flint and steel, we strike,

and the sparks fly. It will be ever so—strike, strike, and the sparks fly.'

'When I reach St. Kerian,' said Josephine, 'I suppose, if you continue in this unforgiving mind, I shall see nothing of you?'

'Nothing.'

'It is hard to put me there alone, without friends, a stranger.'

'I came there a stranger, and have now no friends there.'

'But you have your children. With them you need no outsiders; but I am quite alone. You will let me see the dear little ones?'

'No,' he answered; 'I will not let them come near you, lest they take the infection.'

'Richard,' said Josephine very sadly, and in a low despondent voice, 'it seems to me that we have exactly altered our positions; I was once full of cruel speeches and unkind acts, and you bore them with singular patience. Now, it is you who are cruel and unkind, and I do not cry out, though you cause me great pain.'

He did not answer her; but he said: 'I will not be seen driving you into St. Kerian, as I would not be seen driving you out of Exeter. You shall get out at this next inn. It is respectable and clean. You shall stay the night there, and to-morrow come on with the carrier's wagon.'

'Will there be no one to receive me and show me where I am to go? O Richard! you are treating me very cruelly.'

'I am treating you as you deserve,' he answered. 'My mother shall await your arrival and show you to your lodging.'

He drew up before the tavern that stood by itself where roads crossed. He took down her box and then something else from the inside of the van.

'What is this?' asked Josephine. 'It is not mine; but it has "Cornellis, passenger, St. Kerian," on it; and—it—it looks like a sewing-machine.'

'It is a sewing-machine.'

She stood and looked at him. 'You mean it as a present for me. You bought it in Launceston, because I said I would work as a dressmaker and so earn my livelihood.—No; I will not take anything you give me: send it back.'

He stamped with impatience. 'How perverse and proud you are!—You do not alter; you are always the same. I do

not give you the sewing-machine. My poor little crippled Bessie shall give it you. Each of my children has a savings-bank book, and for every journey I make, some of the profits go into their little stores. Bessie shall pay for the sewing-machine out of her money. It shall be withdrawn from the bank for the purpose.—Will that content you?'

Josephine thought a moment, and then, raising her great full eyes on him, she said: 'Yes; I will take it from Bessie.—Richard! if, as you assert, I was the cause of her being injured, yet I am very sure her gentle little heart bears me no malice. You have told her that I crippled her, you have taught her to hate me——'

'No,' answered Cable hurriedly; 'I have not spoken of you, not uttered your name since I left Hanford. The children have forgotten your existence.'

'Let little Bessie come to me and I will tell her all. I will take to myself the full blame, and then—she will put her dear arms round my neck and kiss me and forgive me. But you——'

'But I,' interrupted Cable, 'am not a child. Bessie does not know the consequences, cannot measure the full amount of injury done her. If she could, she would never, never forgive you; no'—he broke his stick in his vehemence—'never! If she had a head to understand, she would say: "There are hours every day that I suffer pain. I cannot sleep at night because of my back. That woman is the cause. I cannot run about and play with my sisters. That woman did it. I shall grow up deformed, and people will turn and laugh at me, and rude children point and mock me. That woman brought this upon me. I shall see my sisters as young maidens, beautiful and admired, only I shall not be admired. That woman is the cause. I shall love with all the fire of my heart, that grows whilst my body remains stunted, my woman's heart in a child's frame—but no one will love me; he whom I love will turn from me in disgust and take another in his arms. I owe that also to this woman."—If she foresaw all this, would Bessie forgive you and love you, and put her arms about you and kiss you? No; she would get up on her knees on your lap and beat your two great eyes with her little fists till you could not see out of them any more, but wept out of them brine and blood.' Then he mounted the driver's seat in front of his van, lashed

the horse, and left her standing in the road before the inn with her box and the sewing-machine.

Thereupon, a strong temptation arose and beset Josephine. Why should she go on to St. Kerian?—why sojourn there as a stranger, ignored by her own husband? Why should she bow to a life of privation of the most trying kind, intellectual privation, if nothing was to be gained by it? She had reached the first shelf in her plunge, and the golden cup was not there. Now, she was diving to a second and lower shelf, and she saw no prospect of retrieving what she sought on it. The shelf on which she had first lodged was in shallow water, within the light of the sun; it was not so far removed from the social and spiritual life of the cultured class to which she belonged, as that into which she was now called to descend. On that other shelf there was ebb and flow, and now and then she could enjoy the society of her social equals, if not to converse with them, to hear their cultured voices, see their ease of manner, and enjoy the thousand little amenities of civilisation which hang about the mansion of a lady of position. She had been there as a mermaid belonging to both regions, half lady, half servant; and very unpleasant, not to say repugnant to her cultured instincts and moral sense, as she had found the lower element which had half engirdled her, there was still an upper region in which she could breathe. Now she was to be wholly submerged, to go down to the depth where only the unlettered and undisciplined swim, where only broad dialect is spoken, coarse manners are in vogue, and life is without any of the polish and adornment found in the world above the water-line. In the upper air, when she floated, she could hear the birds sing and see the flowers, and smell the fragrance of the clover and bean fields; below, she would hear nothing but strident tones, see nothing but forms uncouth, smell nothing but what is rank. Why should she make this second plunge? Why—when she clearly saw that on this lower platform the golden goblet did not lie? Would it be a final leap? Would it necessitate a further descent into gulfs of darkness and horror? No; hardly that. Intellectually there was no further dive. She could hardly find a ledge below that of the unreasoning, unread, untrained. 'Neath that was the abyss of moral defect, into which she could not fall.

In the old Assyrian poem of 'Ishtar,' the goddess is represented descending through several houses into Hades, and as she approaches each, the gatekeepers divest her of some

her clothing, till she reaches Abadon, where she is denuded of everything. Josephine was something like Ishtar—she was forced in her downward pilgrimage, at every mansion of the nether world, to lay aside some of her ornaments acquired above. She had set forth with her mind richly clothed; she was a refined and accomplished girl, passionately fond of music, with a delicate artistic taste, a love of literature, and an eager mind for the revelations of science. If she had an interest that came second to music, it was love of history—that faculty which, like music and colour, is inherent in some, is wholly deficient in others. To some, the present is but a cut flower, of fleeting charm, unless it have its root in the past, when at once it acquires interest, and is tenderly watched and cultivated. The historic faculty is closely allied to the imagination. It peoples a solitude with forms of beauty and interest; it builds up walls, and unrolls before the fancy the volume of time, full of pictures. The possessor of these gifts is never alone, for the past is always about him, a past so infinitely purer and better than the present, because sublimated in the crucible of the mind.

Now, what struck Josephine above everything in the under-water world into which she stepped was the inability of its denizens to appreciate what is historical. They seemed to her like people who have no perspective, like half-blind men, who see men as trees walking. They had no clear ideas as to time or as to distance. Brussels and Pekin, foreign cities about equidistant, and Iceland and Tierra del Fuego, foreign islands in the same hemisphere. The Romans built the village churches; but whether the classic Romans or the Roman Catholics, was not at all known: nor was it certain when Oliver Cromwell stabled his horses in the churches, whether in the time of the Romans, or in the Chartist rows; neither whether Oliver Cromwell were a French republican or an Irish papist. Turkeys came of course from Turkey, of which, probably, Dorking is the capital, because thence came also some big fowls; and necessarily Jerusalem artichokes are derived from the holy city, or else why are they called Jerusalem artichokes? In literature it was the same. Below the water, the denizens had heard of Shakspeare, but didn't think much of him; he didn't come near Miss Braddon. Swift—yes, he wrote children's stories—'Gulliver's Travels' and the 'Robins.' Thackeray! he was nowhere—not fit to hold a candle to Mrs. Henry Wood; there were no murders in his tales. In this subaqueous world, music was not; if

there had been stillness, it would have been well; but in place of the exquisite creations of the great tone masters, sprang a fungoid, scabrous growth of comic song, 'Villikens and his Dinah,' 'Pop goes the Weasel,' and revivalist hymns. Josephine in descending so low left behind her everything that to her made life worth having. She must cast aside her books, lay down her music, her painting; and be cut away from all communion with the class in which all the roots of her inner life were planted. Was she called on to do this? What would come of the venture?

But then came another question: Could she go back? To Hanford Hall and to her father? No; she had taken her course with full determination of pursuing it to the end. She would not return. She must follow what her heart told her was the right thing to do, at whatever cost to herself. Ishtar would lay aside every adornment, only not the pure white robe of her moral dignity. Before the last house, she would stand and wait, and not tap at that door, wait, and lie down there and die, rather than return except at the call of Richard.

CHAPTER LII.

THE SECOND SHELF.

Mrs. Cable was waiting before the door of the St. Kerian inn, where hung the sign of the 'Silver Bowl,' when Josephine arrived. She received her with stately gravity and some coldness. The old woman saw that her daughter-in-law was greatly altered. Her girlishness was gone; womanhood had set in, stamping and characterising her features. She was thin and pale, and did not look strong.

Mrs. Cable led her to the village grocer and postmistress, a Miss Penruddock, and showed Josephine a couple of neat plain rooms, one above-stairs, a bedroom, and the other below as a sitting-room. Everything was scrupulously clean; the walls were whitewashed, the bed and window-furniture white, the china white, and the deal boards of the floor scrubbed as white as they could be got. Josephine's box was moved up stairs, and the sewing-machine put in the parlour below. Her landlady was in and out for some little while, to make

sure that all was comfortable, till the sorting-time for the letters engaged her in the shop. The atmosphere of the house was impregnated with the odour of soap, tea, and candles—a wholesome and not unpleasant savour.

Bessie Cable remained standing in the bedroom; her tall form looked unnaturally tall in the low room, of which the white ceiling was only seven feet above the white floor. 'Is there anything further you require?' she asked. 'I promised my son that I would see that you were supplied with every requisite.'

Josephine looked at her, and drew beseechingly towards her, with her arms out, pleading to be taken to the old woman's heart. But Bessie Cable's first thought was for her son, and she could not show tenderness where he refused recognition.

'I am sorry to receive you thus,' said Mrs. Cable; 'but I cannot forget how that you have embittered my son's life, not only to himself, but also to me, his mother. I had looked forward to a peaceful old age, with him happy, after the storms and sorrows of a rough life. But he shipwrecked his peace and mine when he took you. I dare say you are repentant. The rector told me as much; but the wrong done remains working. One year's seeds make five years' weeds, and the weeds are growing out of the sowing of your cruel lips.'

'You also!' cried Josephine. 'Is no one to be kind to me—all to reproach me?'

'You must make friends here.'

'But you—will you not be my mother, and my friend?'

'Your mother—no. Your friend!—not openly. That I cannot be, because of my son; but I will not refuse you an inner friendship. I believe that now you intend to do right, and that you have acted well in coming here.'

'You think so?'

'Yes; I am sure you have. You could in no other way have shown that you wished to undo the past.'

'I am glad you say that; oh, I am glad! Yesterday, I had a terrible moment of struggle; I was almost about to go away, and not come on here. Now you have repaid me for my fight by these words.'

Bessie looked steadily and searchingly at her. 'I have had years of waiting for what could never come. I had ever an anguish at my heart, like a cancer eating it out. But that

is over. It was torn out by the roots in one hour of great struggle and pain, and since then I have been at ease within. You have now your pain. Mine was different from yours. Mine grew out of a blow dealt me. Yours comes because you have dealt blows. There is nothing for it but to bear the pain and wait. Some day the pain will be over; but how it will be taken away God only knows. I thought that mine would never go; but it went, and went suddenly, and I have felt nothing since. No medicine can heal you—only patience. Wait and suffer; and in God's good time and in His way, the pain will be taken away.'

Josephine suddenly caught the old woman's hand and kissed it.

'Do not—do not!' exclaimed Bessie, as if frightened.

'O Mrs. Cable,' said Josephine, 'I will wait.—And now, tell me another thing. I have said that I will receive nothing of Richard till he will acknowledge me. I know I have acted very wrongly, but I think he is too unforgiving.'

'It is not for me to judge my son, nor to hear any words of condemnation from you.'

'I do not wish to condemn him; but I feel that his justice is prevailing over his mercy.'

'Who hardened him?'

'I—I did it; and I am reaping what I sowed. I own that. But, as he will not receive me, will not season anything he offers me with love, am I wrong to refuse to accept aught of him?'

Mrs. Cable did not answer immediately, but presently she said: 'No—you do right. I did the same. I would not touch anything; but then my case was different; I was the wronged, not the wrongdoer.'

'More the reason that I should refuse,' said Josephine with vehemence.

Again Mrs. Cable considered; then said: 'Yes, that stands to reason; the wrongdoer gives to the wronged one to expiate the wrong, the wrongdoer does not receive from the one wronged—that would aggravate the offence.'

'I am glad you see this,' said Josephine.—'Now—what have you paid for my lodgings? He said you had given a month's rent in advance.'

Mrs. Cable coloured. 'You shall not pay that; indeed you shall not. I engaged the rooms.'

'Because he asked you. I will not stand in his debt.'

'I cannot receive money from you,' exclaimed Mrs. Cable. 'It would burn my fingers.'

Then Josephine knelt by her box and opened it. 'We will come to an agreement another way,' she said. 'There is something in the bottom of my trunk—the only poor remains of my finery I have brought with me. You shall take that, and some day it can be cut up or adapted for Mary. Perhaps Mary may be married, and then she shall have my old wedding dress. I brought it from Hanford with me, not that I intended ever again to wear it, but it served me as a remembrancer. In it I was married, and in it I gave the last offence to my husband. In it I gained him, and in it I lost him. But I shall require it now no more. Take it, and do with it what you like. The silk is very good; it was a costly dress. Richard is building a new house; the driver pointed it out to me as I came along—do not think he had any notion how nearly I was interested in it—he said that Richard Cable came poor to the place, and will soon be the wealthiest man in it. When he has his grand new house, his little girls must dress well as little ladies; and Mary, when she is married from it, may wear my wedding dress. I trust she will be happier than I have been or am likely to be.' She looked up from the box. How large her eyes were, full of expression and intelligence—beautiful eyes, and now looking unusually bright and large because she was tired and thin and sunken about the sockets of the eyes.

'Have you been unwell?' asked Mrs. Cable.

'No—only unhappy.'

'It takes a great deal of unhappiness to kill,' said Bessie meditatively. 'I thought sometimes I could not live, so great were my sorrow and shame.'

'I do not care much whether I live or die,' said Josephine. 'Life is very full of trouble and disappointment, of humiliation and self-reproach to me.'—Then, in an altered voice: 'Will you take the dress?'

'Yes,' answered Mrs. Cable, still studying her face—'yes—Josephine.'

A smile played over the face of the still kneeling girl. 'It does me good to hear my Christian name again,' she said. 'At Bewdley, I was only "Cable." I should be thankful now for Joss-e-phine, though once I scorned to be so named.' She replaced her clothes in the trunk and laid the white silk dress on the bed.

'What is that? That is one of Richard's old handkerchiefs,' said Mrs. Cable.

'Yes,' answered Josephine, lowering her head. 'I found it in the cottage after you were all gone. I will do up the dress in it, if you will promise to let me have the old blue handkerchief again. I—I value it. I once laughed at it—just as I laughed at my name pronounced incorrectly, and at his boots; and now—it is otherwise. I value the handkerchief; let me have it again.'

Then Mrs. Cable took Josephine's head between her hands and drew it towards her; then checked herself, and thrust her off, and said: 'I cannot, till my son acknowledges you; it would not be just to him.'

Josephine sighed. The colour had fluttered to her cheek and her eyes had laughed; and now the colour faded and the laugh went out of her eyes. 'Am I not to see the children?' she asked.

'I cannot forbid you seeing them,' answered Bessie Cable; 'but you are not to make their acquaintance and be friendly with them. You shall make them all a new set of gowns and frocks; you shall have their old ones as patterns, but must make them a size larger, as the children are growing—that is, all but Bessie. I suppose that the dresses will have to be fitted; then you may touch them, and speak to them; but you must not kiss them or be friendly with them. Speak to them only about the fit of their clothes.'

'I am very hardly treated,' said Josephine.

'You must consider—you have brought it on yourself.'

'Yes, I have done that, and I must bear my pain.—I shall see little or nothing of Richard?'

'Little or nothing, and he will not speak to you. He is away a greal deal now. We see him only at intervals; and when he is at home, he wishes to be left undisturbed with his children.' Then, once more, Mrs. Cable asked if Josephine had all that she needed; and left, with the white silk dress tied up in Richard's blue handkerchief, when assured that nothing further was required except that which she was not empowered to give.

Many days passed, and Josephine sat in her little parlour working at the frocks for the seven girls—frocks!—gowns for the elder children, who grew apace. Through her window she saw them pass, tall, beautiful maidens with fair hair, like corn, as yellow and as shining, and eyes blue, and cheeks like wild-

roses. Among the dark-haired, dark-eyed, and sallow-skinned natives, they were looked at with surprise and a little envy. They kept themselves aloof from the village children—not that they were proud, not that they shared their father's prejudices, but that they had enough of companions among themselves. They were an attached family; they had been nurtured in love, and the love their father had poured into their infant hearts had filled them and overflowed towards each other. They had, indeed, their little quarrels, but they passed like April gusts, leaving the sunshine brighter after the cloud, and the landscape fresher for the shower.

Then, at times, Josephine's work fell from her fingers, and she sat with the needle in her hand, poised and motionless, looking before her. It was not the historic muse who then visited her and raised a mirage picture of castles and knights jousting, and gay ladies looking on in the most picturesque of costume; or of tapestried chambers, in which walked Van Dyck figures with long hair and Steenkirks, and rapiers clinking and spurs jingling, and lapdogs of King Charles's breed snapping—it was a muse who is nameless, a Cinderella muse, thrust aside by her sisters, and clean forgotten, the Muse of Unfulfilled aspirations, clothed in white with a hawthorn crown, and eyes filled with tears, and bare feet dripping blood.

What were the visions raised before the brooding mind of Josephine, sitting at ease in the enchanted palace, sent to sleep and made motionless in the midst of work? The picture brought up by the magic wand of the muse was a humble one—of a little cradle, in which lay a sleeping babe, with one small hand out, and a coral resting on the quilt; of a baby snuggling into her bosom at night, and sobbing, and being patted, patted, patted by the hour, and talked to half-pitifully, half-wearily, to coax it to sleep; of a child growing up, standing at her knee and learning to thread beads, and whilst threading, repeating, 'Once upon a time, when Jenny Wren was young;' of a young maiden—like Mary in growth and beauty and sweetness and innocence, looked up to and loved by all the village, and adored by her mother, who only lived and thought for her. Her day-dream went no further. Oh, if she could have had a child to love and labour for, to cherish and talk to, to kiss and laugh to and weep over!—her solitude would not have been so depressing, her pain not so unrelieved. Bessie Cable had endured years of suffering, yet what was

hers to that of Josephine, for Bessie had her child to love? She looked for the time when the fair faces of Richard's daughters passed her window, and her ear was alert to catch every tone and inflection of their sweet voices, whenever they came into the shop to buy the groceries needed for their home.

When they came to be fitted on, her slim white fingers trembled, and she could not well see what were the defects to be remedied, because her eyes were clouded. Finally the seven dresses were finished and sent to the cottage, and then each had a little packet of sweet things neatly wrapped up in the pocket; for that the children came and thanked Miss Penruddock, for they supposed the kind shopkeeper had put them there.

With such dear children about him, Richard had a home complete in joys, and he needed not another inmate. He could dispense with his wife, who was not the mother of these lambs; surely, he did not imagine the solitude of the girl who was without an associate of any kind.

After Josephine had done the frocks, other work came in. The servant-maids at the parsonage wanted this and that; and then some of the farmers' wives sent for her to come and work at their houses. She found that thus only could she obtain continuous work. At the farms she was well treated, given plenty of food, somewhat coarse, but wholesome, served in a rough way, and partaken with the labouring men from the land. There was also plenty of conversation going on, but it was wholly confined to local gossip—the misdoings of this young woman, the shameful conduct of the parson in preaching at So-and-so, and the favouritism of the schoolmaster among the children. The maladies of the family, of the cattle, of the ducks and hens, were discussed with intolerable prolixity, and with a breadth of language unsuitable to the narrowness of the subject. The costume of the continental peasant is a century behind the fashion of the present. The Black Forester wears the knee-breeches and long coat and waistcoat that were the dress of gentlemen in the time of our great-grandfathers; and the Tyrolean peasantess wears the short bodice of our great-grandmothers. We have no costume in England—slopshops everywhere kill costume—but we have social habits, and the habits of our lower middle-class, of the yeomen and the tenant-farmer, are those of our great-grandfathers; they crack the same free jokes, and their wives

laugh at them, as our great-grandmothers laughed; and they drink till they are merry, and upset their light carts coming home from market; and fall into the ditch, just as our great-grandfathers tumbled under their tables. The wives are thrifty, and great at cordials and supplies of linen; and they as girls had worked samplers, which they retain in married life framed on their walls, to be tokens of their skill with the needle; just as did these ancient ladies in our dining-room who look down on us out of their tarnished frames and through cracked varnish.

In the eastern counties, the old race of small farmers and yeomen have well-nigh disappeared, or rather they bid fair to disappear, before the gentleman-farmer with his thousand acres; but the agricultural depression which has cut down these big men has spared the little, and they are reappearing again. In the west of England there are very few mammoths, only small men, and the small men make the money and stand the stress of hard times.

The class among which Josephine went was quite different from that in the servants' hall at Bewdley. That class was one of the spoiled tools of luxury, young men and girls transplanted from cottages where they had lacked everything but the barely necessary, to a house where they lacked nothing, but rioted and surfeited on abundance. In their homes they had been subjected to the rough moral control of village opinion; in the hall, they were a law unto themselves. They had been brought up in freedom and frankness; and they found themselves in a region where they must practise dissimulation as part of their qualification. They resembled wild flowers brought into a forcing-house, treated with strong manures and much bottom heat. But where Josephine now went, it was among wild flowers in their natural element; they were fresh, strong, rough-stemmed; not brilliant or choice, but natural. In the servants' hall, an atmosphere of absurd affectation had prevailed: Mr. Polkinghorn talked of his ancestors; and the maids languished, minced their words, and imitated the easy motions of the ladies they saw. In the farmhouse, the fresh air blew—all was natural and hearty—but the fresh air was somewhat charged with the reek of stable and cowhouse. From the farmer down to the servant, all were blunt, dull, noisy, ignorant, free in their talk, but with a healthy downright sense of the just and moral, and with great kindliness of heart and readiness to assist one another.

Josephine was obliged to carry her sewing-machine when she went to the farmhouses, scattered at considerable distances from the 'church-town' where was the post-office where she lived. As the winter drew on, the nights were dark and the weather stormy. She was often wet through and tired, and the burden of the sewing-machine was almost more than she could bear. She did not like to ask to be assisted with it; the sturdy country girls thought nothing of such a weight, and did not mind a wet through and a trudge in the mud, so that she was not volunteered assistance.

When she reached her lodgings, she was sometimes so exhausted that she flung herself on her bed, too fagged to take off her wet things; and thus she would have lain and fallen asleep, had not the kindly postmistress looked after her, and insisted on her getting up and putting on dry clothes. Every Sunday morning early, she went to the cob cottage in the lane that led to Rosscarrock, with a little basket in her hand, and laid on the window-ledge of the children's room seven little bunches of flowers—rosemary and mignonette, a monthly rose and marigold, such simple flowers as she could beg of the farmers' wives where she worked on the Saturday. And every Sunday the seven girls went to church with these flower-posies in their bosoms—'the pixy present,' they called them, and always wondered whence they came; and little thought that they came from the strange young woman with the wonderful voice, that the vicar's wife had lately taken into the choir. Did Richard guess? He asked no questions; but his mother said to him, when he happened to be home on Sundays: 'Do you see these pretty posies? The little maids found them again this morning on their window-sill.—Smell them, Richard; how sweet they are—they scent the room.'

'We shall have grand flowers when we come to Red Windows,' he said.—'No; I will not smell them: they give me a headache; take them away.'

Then winter-frost killed most flowers; but the feathery seed-heads of the traveller's joy, with blackberry leaves of carmine and orange and gamboge and sap-green, with a rose-hip or two, made nosegays as beautiful and rich as any made of flowers, and these were laid as had been the bunches of blossom.

Christmas morning came, and Josephine started from her bed as the day began to break. She had made seven of the prettiest little posies of white chrysanthemums, which had

flowered on untouched by frost, and they were surrounded by the green fronds of the crane's-bill.

What was that? Her heart stood still, as, undressed, in her night-attire, with a white bunch in each hand, and her dark hair down her back, she stood listening. What was that? A sound she knew well, but had not heard for long. Again! What was it? In the room or outside? Then a cry of joy. 'My Puffles! my Puffles! You dear one! Who has brought you here?'

Her bullfinch, in the cage, that she had sorrowfully parted with at Bewdley, was in her window. Who had brought it her? Who had thought of her sorrowing to be without her bird? Who but he who had let it go and caught it again?

That Christmas Day, clear and sweet rang out the voice of Josephine in the song of the angels, and her heart beat with hope.

CHAPTER LIII.

RED WINDOWS AGAIN.

THE house progressed. By Christmas, the roof was on; then the plasterers and the carpenters went to work, not fast, but leisurely. They kept holiday on Christmas Day, and on Old Christmas and at New Year; and they knocked off work early on Saturdays, and came to work late on Mondays. They had much information to impart to each other, and all were called together to consult on every detail. When it was wet weather, they came and looked at the work and went away; and charged half a day's work for looking on the work and deciding to do nothing. When the masons were ready to build, the stones were not ready for them to build with, or the mortar was not mixed; so they waited and talked, and charged for having been on the spot with nothing to do. When it came to plastering, they were short of laths or short or nails, or short of sand or short of lime—short of everything except reasons for doing nothing. So with the carpenters. They went to work to do the thing the wrong way; and when it was done, and they were convinced it was wrong, they went to work and pulled it to pieces again; and recommenced doing it in another way. When the rain fell, or there was frost,

masons, plasterers, carpenters, plumbers, and painters wanted to work outside, and saw clear reasons why it was impossible to do anything inside; and as the rain hindered or the frost prevented, they went away with their hands in their pockets and sat under a shed, looking at the front of the house and the rain or the frost; and charged for their desire to work when it was not possible to work. When the sun shone and the air was warm, they wanted to work indoors, and there were unanswerable reasons why the work out of doors could not be got on with. However, in spite of all these difficulties, the house progressed, but progressed so slowly as to astonish even the masons and carpenters and plumbers and plasterers and painters themselves, and to comfort them greatly. They were not going to kill the goose off-hand that laid the golden egg, but pick him to pieces feather by feather.

The plumbers laid the lead, and the masons walked over it with hobnailed shoes, making holes in it, which required a revision and a patching with solder of the lead which was quite new; and when the glass was put into the windows, the carpenters drove planks through the panes, necessitating new glazing. And the ironmonger brought grates that would not fit the chimney-pieces, and invoked the masons to pull out the mantel-pieces again and put them in afresh. Then he made holes in the plaster for the bell-wires so ragged and so big that the plasterers must needs come and mend them up again. Lastly, the glazier put his hand into putty or white paint and smeared a circle in the midst of every pane, to give work to a woman to clean the windows.

The painter performed wonders; he coloured all the woodwork of the house flesh-colour, and called that priming. Why it should be primed flesh-colour, he did not say. I remember how that there stood over the market hall in Launceston—and it stands there still—a clock on which are two figures with hammers, that strike the hours and the quarters. Many years ago, the civic authorities ordered the repainting of these automata. Then a painter went up on a scaffold and primed them, after the manner of painters, flesh-colour. The mayor issuing from the Guild Hall saw this, and was frightened, or shocked, and with mayoral mantle and gold chain of office about his shoulders, ran up the ladder and said: 'What are you about? We don't want to have Adam and Eve here.'

'I'm priming, your Worship,' answered the painter, 'as

you were primed afore you drew on your clothes and insignia.'

Now, it is reasonable enough that figures representing human beings should be coloured pink first, and painted with clothing to taste, afterwards; but why windows? Why doors? Why skirting-boards?

A recent writer on Natural Law and the Moral Order holds up to scorn the hermit lobster, which does not build its own shell, but seeks a ready-built house into which to slip. The writer of that book never had to do with the erection of a manse for himself, I presume, or he would have taken off his hat and bowed to the hermit lobster, and pointed him out as an example of instinct so acute that it reached wisdom.

Richard Cable had accepted the builder's rough estimate of cost and of time the house would take in building, and had left a margin; but soon found that the margin should have been as wide as that in an *édition de luxe* book or of a modern funeral card. A builder can always discover reasons for spinning out the time, and especially the expense. Cable found, before the house was done, that he had spent all the money put by for it, and was obliged to borrow for its completion and for the furnishing; and this did not improve his humour. He had not allowed the house to be built by contract, because he knew very well that what is built by contract is badly built; and that if he were to pay an overlooker to see to his interests, the masons and the carpenters, and the plumbers and glaziers, and slaters and painters, would give the man an acknowledgment to overlook their bad work. So he had his house built by day-work, and then it was to the interest of the men to do their work in the most substantial and thorough manner, because that is also the most slow and costly manner.

When Cable was on his way back from each journey, he thought within himself: 'Now I shall see a great advance in the work; I have been away three weeks.' But on his arrival he required good-nature and faith to see that a proper amount of work had been done; and good-nature and faith fail when disappointed repeatedly. However, the house was finished at length and furnished—furnished quietly and scantily, because the money ran short. Richard was not alarmed. He knew he would earn the necessary sum, but he was sore at having to borrow. The consciousness of being in debt was new to him, and fretted his already sore spirit. It took the zest off

the pleasure of having a grand new house of his own. He had no difficulty in getting the money advanced by the bank; he was pretty well known to be a man who made gold by turning it about in his hands. It flattered his pride to be able to borrow so easily, and yet it galled him to know that the house was not absolutely his own till the debt was cleared away.

The house was finished; and it had seven red windows in the upper story, and three on each side of the door below. To the door led a flight of slate steps, and the door opened into a spacious hall. The house looked larger than it really was, because it was shallow. The hill rose too rapidly in the rear to allow of much back premises. In the garden was a summer-house, as he had seen in his dream, painted green, with a gilt knob at the top, very fresh and shining.

When the house was complete, and ready for him, he arrived from Somersetshire; and in the evening, when the children were in bed, his mother put the key on the table. 'There!' said she. 'To-morrow we leave this old cottage for the new house. Richard, why not take possession of it with a new heart? You are in the wrong now. She has been here many months, and all speak well of her. She works for her living, and works hard. There are no pride and stubbornness left in her; all that has passed from her into you; and the gentleness and pity and meekness are gone from you into her.'

He moved impatiently. He took up the key and threw it down; then he pushed it from one side of the table to the other, and his face was sullen. 'Mother,' he said, 'I would not allow another to speak to me of her. It is enough. You have said your say. I have suffered too much from her. I have said it. We are parted for ever.'

'You have not seen her.'

'I do not choose to see her.'

'But you should. She is greatly changed, and looks weak and frail. You do not think that the great alteration in her mode of life must hurt her. She is like a flower taken out of a garden and put on the moor, where every wind blows her about, and every animal that goes by tramples on her.'

'Who has dared to touch her?' asked Cable, flaring up.

'I do not mean that any one has purposely wronged her; but she is in a place and among people who do not under-

stand her, and she cannot endure rough handling. She is too delicate, and it will kill her.'

'What do you want, then? If I give her money, she will not take it.'

'Not if it be given churlishly.'

'Churlishly! Are you also turned against me?'

'You are acting wrongly. I would not say so to another; I would not let her suppose that I reproached you; but in my heart I think it. I also went on for years harbouring my wrong, and believing that I could never forgive it; but the time came when I was forced to forgive; and you, Richard, you also must do the same.'

'You have said this before. I cannot listen. I shall go away again;' and he put his hat on his head and went forth.

Next day, the few things required to be removed from the cottage were carted to the new house; but Richard would not move into it till evening, when no one would be about to observe the migration.

The sun had set when they all started for Red Windows, the father leading, then Mrs. Cable and little Bessie, and the rest two and two, the twins of course together. The youngest carried their toys, a battered doll, a wooden horse; and the elder, sundry treasures that could not be intrusted to other hands to transport. The evening was still, soft, and summery; bats flew about and screamed ear-piercingly. The hedges were full of foxgloves and wreathed with honeysuckle. Glowworms shone in the banks, jewelling the way, as pixy lamp-bearers welcoming them to their new home. The procession moved slowly, because Bessie was heavy to carry, and because Susie could not walk fast. It moved silently, because the children were depressed in spirits, sorry to leave their little rooms and garden—the known for the new, the loved for strange.

Cable spoke; but his voice startled him and the rest. He felt not as if he were being advanced in position, but as if he were going to execution. He turned and looked at his mother. 'Let me carry Bessie now,' he said.—'What are you whispering?'

'I was not whispering.'

'I saw your lips moving.'

'I was repeating to myself some words that kept coming up in my mind, like a cork in water.'

'What words?'

'Merely a text, and I cannot say why they rise.'

'What is the text?'

'"He shall lay the foundation in his firstborn, and in his youngest shall he set up the gates."'

'What do you mean by that?'

'I mean nothing; but I cannot get the text out of my head. It seems to point——'

Cable laughed. 'This is mere superstition, mother. You have Cornish blood in you. Besides, the foundations are laid and the gates set up, and nothing has occurred.'

She said no more, nor did he; but the words she had spoken did not help to cheer him. Presently he found his own lips moving; he was repeating the ominous words; and a fear fell on him lest they might apply not to the bare walls and wooden gates, but to the domestic life in the new mansion—a new life to be built up amid new surroundings and in a new sphere. For, indeed, Richard by this move mounted the social scale. In the cottage, he was but a cottager; in the grand new house, he was transferred to the middle class. As Josephine went down, he went up.

He opened the garden gates, and the feet of the little procession trod the newly gravelled path. There were flower-beds, but no flowers; a lawn, but the grass was battered and cut up with the traffic of the builders. They came to the flight of steps; and Cable went up, put the key in the door and tried to open it; but the wood was swollen, and the door stuck. He put his knee to it and forced it open, and the noise reverberated through the empty house like thunder. Then the children came in. The air within smelt of lime and paint. He struck a match and lighted a paraffin lamp. The children looked round in astonishment, but expressed no pleasure; they shivered; the night air had been cold, but the interior of this new house seemed colder still.

In the dining-room, a cold supper was laid—lamb and salad, whortleberry tart, and cream, blancmange—'Shak; trade, that is bluemange,' the woman called it who had cooked the supper, an old cook from the parsonage, married in the place.

'Sit down,' said Richard. 'Eat heartily your first meal in Red Windows.'

But the children were not hungry; his mother did not care to eat, and he himself had no appetite. He forced himself to take lamb, but he could hardly swallow it. The

children were silent, looking about them at the walls and ceiling, and chimney-piece with the mirror over it.

'Well,' said Cable, 'as no one seems hungry, the sooner to bed the better.'

So they parted for the night.

Next morning, he was in his garden. The blacksmith appeared at the gate.

'Neighbour,' said he, 'glad to see you well quartered. I'm sorry I haven't been over the house; the iron work was not given to me, but to a Camelford man. I'd have served you better. However, I bear no malice. I should like to see over the box, if you've no objections.'

'Box! What box? Do you call a mansion with seven windows on the front in the upper storey and six below—a box? I have objections to show my box, as you call it.'

'Oh, I meant no offence,' said Penrose. 'I'll come another day.'

'This is not a showplace,' said Cable curtly.

The next to come was the innkeeper. 'Halloh! Mr. Cable! Shake hands. Glad to see you. We've lost our guardian—died the other day; so we've had a vestry meeting and elected you guardian of the poor, unanimous.'

'I—guardian of the poor! the poor of St. Kerian?' He laughed bitterly. 'No one cared for me and watched over me when I was poor and ill. Why should I care for your poor and be their guardian, now I am rich?'

'Come, Cable, don't be sour. Give a sovereign, and we'll have the bells rung for your house-warming.'

'Not one penny. It concerns no one but myself and my family that I enter Red Windows.'

The taverner shook his head and went away. Then his mother came to him and said: 'Richard, why do you not meet the St. Kerian people in a friendly way, when they make the first step towards good-fellowship? Why do you refuse the hand that is held out for yours? Why should you be angered that they look on you now with other eyes than those with which they saw you enter the parish? When you broke stones on the road, what was there in you to attract their esteem? When they saw your love and care for your children, they respected you; and when they found you were making money, they acknowledged that you had brains. Was not that natural and reasonable and right? When you were poor, with seven hungry mouths crying for food, there

were others worse off than yourself, and what sympathy did you show them? When a crippled beggar came through the village, did you rush after him, take off your hat, and offer him hospitality? Why, then, are you angry with the St. Kerian people because they only begin to touch their hats and notice you, now that you are well off? You are well off because you have talents above their level, and this they recognise.'

'I wonder what *she* thinks, now that we are in our house, when she sees the smoke rising from the chimneys, and the windows lighted up?'

'She thinks that a cottage where love is, is better than a thirteen-windowed mansion where there is hardness of heart and pride.'

Richard did not answer; he walked away, and went about his grounds and planned improvements, and seated himself in his garden-house, and tried to believe he was happy. At night, when alone, he sat again in his summer-house with the door open, and looked down at St. Kerian, which lay in the valley, with a gossamer veil hanging over it, the vapour in the air condensing above the stream. The church tower stood out like ivory against the black yews. He could see the chimneys of the parsonage, and the glitter of the tiny conservatory flashing the moonbeams back. He heard the soothing rush of the water in the mill 'leat' running the waste water into the river. In the wood behind, the owls were hooting. On such a night as this he had stood at his cottage window there below, two years ago, and resolved to realise his dream. He had accomplished what he had determined, and was he satisfied? He strained his eyes to see the old cottage; but it was dark; but, through the soft haze, he saw one golden pin-point, from where the post-office stood. Was that *her* light? Was she sitting there, at the window, looking up, out of the valley, at his grand house, on which the moonlight shone? What were her thoughts?

Richard Cable's breast heaved, and a choke came in his breath. He turned his face away and looked at the hills, at the gray moor frosted with moonlight, at the deep sky, and tried to spell stars in it, but could not, because of the suffused light. Then his eyes went back to the golden speck, the one spangle of yellow in the cold scene of white and gray and black. Then he stood up, and sat with his back to the door and looked into the gloom of the interior, and down at the

rectangular oblong patch of white, like snow on the floor, laid there by the moon. But he could not long study that. He turned on his seat, and once again the golden speck shot into his brain and down into his heart, where it fell like a spark and burnt him, that he uttered a suppressed cry.

'It is all stubbornness and pride,' he said, rubbing the bench with his hand, as if to polish it. 'She is determined to show me that she can do without me. What does my mother mean by saying the rough life is killing her? She has chosen it out of obstinacy, to spite me. If I were to give her five pounds a week, she would throw them down at my feet. I can do nothing. If she is determined to kill herself, she must do so. She is proud. Why is her light burning now? She is working on late, that she may earn money and do without help. It is flint and steel striking, and the spark—there it is, and it is burning me.'

CHAPTER LIV.

'NO FOOL LIKE AN OLD FOOL.'

'I SUPPOSE,' said Richard Cable to his mother, 'that *she* would not live in our old cottage? Not if I offered it her rent free?'

'The cottage is mine, Richard, not yours. Perhaps from me she would take it, but not from you.'

'Then you may offer it her.' He had his hands in his pockets; he drew them sharply forth and began to hum a tune—it was the Mermaid's song from *Oberon*. When he thought of her, that tune came up with the thought. 'Mother,' he said, breaking off in the midst of the tune, 'now that we are in this house, we are in a different position, and the little girls must be suited to it. I've heard them talking just like the St. Kerian children—with a Cornish twang, and I won't have it. They must have better schooling than they can get at the national school.'

'Will you send them away?' asked Mrs. Cable in dismay, as her heart failed her at the thought of parting with her grandchildren.

'No; they must not leave home; they must learn better

here. They should be able to play on the piano, and to sing, and read French, and know something of all those concerns which young ladies are expected to be acquainted with.'

'What! Are you going to bring a governess into the house to them?' asked Mrs. Cable with dismay almost equal to the first at the prospect of parting with the children.

'No; I'll have no stranger here,' he answered.

'Then, how are they to learn?'

'Is there no one in the village who could teach them? I do not mean that they should be ignorant, or know no more than the labourers' children, because they will have money, and if they marry, they shall marry well.'

'There is a long time to that,' said Mrs. Cable.

'Who can teach them?' asked Richard.

'There is but one person who can do this,' answered she, after a pause.

'She must be well paid for her trouble. You must arrange all that. Only, I will not have this teacher come here; the children must go to her. Pay her what you like, and take her, whoever she may be. I do not ask her name; I want to know nothing about her; but if she teaches them, I will not have her too free with them: she must undertake not to kiss them, and coax them to love her. Do not tell me who she is; I do not want to know. I leave all that to you, but I make my stipulations beforehand.'

'You mean this, Richard?'

'I leave it to you. I ask no questions. I want no names named. If the children are to learn the piano, this lady who is to teach them must have one on which they may be taught. I will order one at Launceston to be sent to the cottage.'

'Very well, Richard.'

'I have hit on a great idea,' said he with a sudden change of tone. 'There is always a trouble about feeding the calves with the hand. I have ordered at Bridgewater a lot of stone bottles, like those for ginger-beer, but as large as foot-warmers for bed. And I've had a board put along each side of the calves' van, with holes in it, into which the bottles can be fitted. And then, mother, I've had tubes and nipples made for the bottles; and I pass these into the calves through the bars, and they can all suck comfortably as they ride along. I might take a patent for it, I fancy, if I chose.'

'But, Richard, to go back to the subject——'

He interrupted her hastily. 'I'm going to engage a boy;

and when we come to a hill, he'll walk round the van, and if any of the calves, which are as weak in their intellects as babies, let the nipples out of their mouths, which they may do through the joggling of the van when the roads are fresh stoned, or they may do it out of sheer stupidity—then, I say, the boy will put them back in their mouths again, and fill up the bottles with skim-milk at our halting-places. I've always found the calves get very much pulled down by a journey, and now, with this contrivance, I reckon they will be very much pulled up.'

'But about the girls?'

'I'm going to work on a grander scale altogether, and have a set of vans. I'm quite sure I can carry on the business wholesale, and with this idea of the calves' sucking-bottles carried out into execution, I must succeed.'

There was no getting anything more out of him relative to the education of the children. He was apparently now engrossed in the perfecting of his arrangements for feeding the calves out of bottles.

'It is wearing and exhausting to the hand,' he said. 'It gets like that of a washerwoman who uses soda—all cockled and soft, what with being in the milk and in the calves' mouths. I've tried the butt-end of the driving-whip, but it don't draw up milk, and the calves don't like the taste of the brass mount; so I've had to come back to the hand again. It is possible they may object to the vulcanised india-rubber at first, whilst it is fresh.' Then, abruptly he reverted to what he had spoken of before. 'Don't let *her* think that there's any favour shown in letting her have the cottage. It is done to suit my convenience. Last night, as I sat in my summer-house, I could see down into the village, and, I suppose, to annoy me, she had her lamp burning till late, and there is not a wall or a tree between the post-office and my garden, so that the light of her lamp shone right up in at my door, and sit how I would, I could not get away from it. It aggravated me, and I know I shall get no pleasure out of my summer-house like that. By day, she'll do something to annoy me if she has that window—perhaps put red geraniums in it.'

'But, Richard—it is a mile away.'

'I don't know what the distance is; it aggravates and provokes me past endurance. I shan't be able to sit there of a day, because of the pelargoniums; nor at night, because of

her lamp. I shall have to move the summer-house, and the expense and trouble of that—the having masons and carpenters and painters about the place again, will be so vexing, that I'd rather she went into our old cottage. It would be best for me, and she'd save money herself, for I don't mind the rent, as it is an accommodation to me. I couldn't move the summer-house under ten pounds.'

'And with regard to the matter of the children——'

'There is no favour there, either,' interrupted Richard; 'and I beg you will let her understand that. I want them instructed, and there is no one here but the young ladies at the parsonage and herself fit to teach them; and you can ask the former to undertake the task; if they refuse, then you can offer it to the other one; she gets the job only because there is no one else available. Let her understand that. And mind, tell her, if I send a piano there—I mean to the cottage—it is not that I give it her or lend it her; it is for my daughters to practise on; but I don't object to her playing on it at any other time, because I've always heard that a piano ought to be played on continually to keep it in tune. It would go badly out of tune if it were only used for the children's schooling, and that would spoil their ear.—Also,' continued Cable, 'there are some sticks of furniture, and some bedding and other stuff, and some crockery down there, which must be used to keep the damp out of them, and the moth and the wood-worm. There's no room up here for all these things, and they don't suit this new house; they are left down there to accommodate me; and if she does not pay rent, it is because we find it convenient to put someone in to keep the cottage dry, the mildew out of the furniture, and the moths from the bedding, and to keep the crockery from being chipped. Make her understand that; and if she spoils things, she'll have to pay damages. I do not know that I shan't put some more things into the cottage just to run the chance of their being injured by her, and so deduct the cost of the things spoiled from her wages.' Then, without looking at his mother to see what she thought of his ideas, whether relating to the feeding-bottles for his calves, or the education of his children, he went down into the valley to his old cob cottage.

He had put the key in a secret place—a hole in the thatch, that none but he knew of. He opened the door and went in and locked himself in. The cottage was in the same condition in which it had been left. The stools were round the poor

little table, the armchair by the fire, and the ashes of the peat white on the hearth. Then he took off his coat, and went into the back kitchen and fetched a broom and a pail and a pan, and set to work to clean the house. He did not return to Red Windows all day. He was busy at the cottage. He scrubbed the floors and the little stairs; he brushed down the walls; then he got whiting at the grocer's and whitewashed ceiling and walls. He cleaned up the hearth, and laid fresh kindling-wood on it, and hung a kettle to the crook over it. He paid repeated visits to the shop that day, and bought glazed calico and tacks, and chintz and muslin; and he nailed up curtains to the windows, and put blinds where there were none—'lest,' as he said to himself, 'the lamp should shine out of those windows and torment me.' Afterwards, he got a spade and dug up and tidied the garden. He did not desist from his self-imposed task till late at night, not till everything was done to his satisfaction. He was a man who loved tidiness. Next morning early, he left St. Kerian. This time he went to Bewdley, where he had to bestow some cattle he had contracted to bring to the farmer on the home-farm of the manor.

When he came to the inn, he found Mr. Polkinghorn there, who sprang up, and saluted him with urbanity. 'How are we?' asked the footman; 'bobbish or not? And how is the missus?'

'I am well,' answered Cable gravely. He passed over the second query.

'You haven't come in your travels yet on the manor of Polkinghorn, have you?' inquired the flunky. 'Because, if we could hit on that, there'd be some chance of our recovering the title-deeds, and being reinstalled in our manorial rights. But—you see—till we know where it is, the Polkinghorns can take no step.'

'How go matters with you?' asked Cable.

'Well, queerish,' answered the footman. 'You've heard the news, of course?'

'News? I've heard nothing.'

'Not of our appointment to a bishopric?'

'You. No, certainly.'

'Yes, we are.'

'What? The old lady?'

'Not exactly; but her brother-in-law, old Sellwood. I know him well; he's a nice old shaver. He's going to be a

bishop down your way, at Bodmin. That is in Cornwall, is it not?'

'Yes. *He* to be bishop! I do not look at the papers.'

'Yes; he'll be bishop. I don't know that we care much about it. You see the families of Sellwood and Otterbourne don't need it. They've lots of money, and a twopenny-ha'penny bishopric ain't much to them; especially a new affair, such as this. Why, I don't believe there's even a cathedral there, not a dean and chapter; and—I wouldn't take a bishopric myself where there wasn't a dean and chapter to sit upon. If you don't sit upon somebody, you're nobody. It isn't a man's headpiece that gives him estimation; it is his capacity elsewhere for sitting upon people. What is it that makes Mr. Vickary so much respected in our place? It is that he sits upon us all. If he only sat on the button-boy, would he be held in such high honour? I put it to you, as a man of the world.'

Cable made no reply.

'I think if I may volunteer a suggestion,' said Polkinghorn, 'that I could give you one to improve your business.'

'Indeed?'

'I suppose you've curates down your way?'

'O yes, there are some.'

'When the bishop comes into quarters, there will be a demand for more—for lots.'

'You think so?'

'I'm sure of it,' said the flunky. 'Now, add to your van of calves another of curates, and dispose of them down in Cornwall.—You'll excuse me; I am accounted a joker.' Then looking round, and seeing that Mrs. Stokes was not in the room, he said in a low tone: 'There is worse behind. We're about to have a regular revolution.'

'Of what sort?'

'You'd never guess; and you're somehow mixed up in it.'

'How is that?'

'About that affair of—your wife.'

'What about her?' sharply.

'It seems she has a stylish sort of a father, called Cornellis.'

'Yes, what then?'

'He came here after you took her away. He didn't appear whilst she was in our place. He's a gentleman, you know, and I suppose disapproved of her being in a situation;

though, for the matter of that, I'm a Polkinghorn, and I'm in a situation. What a Polkinghorn can do, a Cable may.'

'Never mind about that; go on.'

'Some folks have vulgar objections to situations. If they do object to them, they're not gentlemen; as I take it, it is low.'

'What has Mr. Cornellis done?'

'Done! You should ask, what is he going to do?'

'Then I do ask that. He has not been to see his daughter where she is now.'

'Oh, I don't fancy he's particularly interested about her. I fancy she was made the excuse for his first coming here, and making our old girl's acquaintance. He's been here off and on a good deal since—a great deal too much for the liking of some of us; and if Miss Otterbourne had taken our opinion, she'd have sent him about his business long ago.—I beg pardon if I offend. He is your father-in-law.'

'You do not offend at all.'

'It was a bit of a come-down his girl marrying you, no doubt, and he cut her off and disowned her for it; but he seemed mighty interested about her after she was gone.'

'He had not sufficient interest to pursue her, and see that she was well and comfortable and in good hands.'

'In good hands! She was in yours, I suppose, comfortable! It seems to me you're not badly off. Besides, as you married her, she was your charge, not his.'

'What further has Mr. Cornellis done?'

'He has made himself a great favourite with the old lady; he humours her, and—— But here comes Mrs. Stokes, and I don't like to talk state secrets before her. I'll tell you later. We were speaking of the bishop. Do you know Sellwood?'

'I have spoken to our rector at Hanford.'

'I can't say I'm intimate with him,' said Mr. Polkinghorn. 'There are some people one can't be intimate with; though one may put out as many feelers as an octopus, there is no laying hold of them. I've taken his shaving-water to him, too.'

This did not seem to interest Cable; he was anxious to hear the rest about Josephine's father. Presently, Mrs. Stokes left the room, and then Mr. Polkinghorn resumed the subject.

'He's an insinuating man is your father-in-law; and

when he found that the old woman was keen on the lost Tribes, bless you, he led her such a tally-ho! after them, it was just like as you play with a kitten, drawing a ball, or a cork along the floor, and whisk and away went the old creature purring and frisking and snapping and clawing. It was quite pretty to see her. And I do believe that he persuaded her that he was the concentration of the Ten Tribes in himself, a sort of a mixed pickle-bottle of capsicum and gherkin, and cauliflower and onion—only put Benjamin and Menasses, and Gad and the rest of 'em, for the vegetables, and a general Judaic flavour for the vinegar.'

'Go on. What next?'

'I should like to know what are the circumstances of your father-in-law? Is he a man of substance or a soap-bubble—which?'

'I cannot say; I suspect the latter.'

'So do I; and I fancy he will take care to make himself a comfortable nest somewhere. There was a goose and a gander on intimate terms, that I knew, and the latter set to ripping the down off the breast of the goose to line a nest. He persuaded her to it, and the fond creature helped to strip her own breast; and the two birds smoothed the down into a very snug sort of nest. Well, will you believe me?—there came a late fall of snow and some very sharp weather, and through it all, the gander sat in the downy nest, and let the goose walk about and shiver in the snow, with her plucked breast quite bare.'

'What do you mean by this?'

'Oh, I'm a wag, and I mean more than I put in plain words. There are parables to be read, and the moral is easy understood by them as has brains. I don't feel sure that your father-in-law has not the nature of that gander, and I'm pretty sure our old woman has that of the goose that helped to pluck herself.'

'Do you mean to say that he is helping himself to her money?'

'I won't say that. But I believe before long he'll persuade her to pay for a marriage license, and then he'll take up his quarters in Bewdley and begin the plucking process. We won't stand it—none of us. We will go.'

'But—she is old enough to be his mother.'

'There is no fool like an old fool.'

CHAPTER LV.

TO THE GALLOPERS.

Captain Edward G., my paternal great-great-uncle, was a notable horseman in his day. Astley, the founder of the equestrian theatre that was the delight of boys in my youth, but which has passed away with Sadler's Wells, Vauxhall, and the Colosseum, Regent's Park, was in his troop, and from him acquired his skill in horsemanship. Among Captain Edward's feats was one in which the pupil never equalled his master. He threw down the several gold links of a chain at irregular intervals along a high-road, and then, striking spurs into his horse, galloped over the course, and as he came to a link, swung himself down, picked it off the ground, recovered his position in the saddle, and so along the whole road, till he had collected in his left hand without exception all the scattered links.

The modern novel-reader emulates the achievements of Captain G., and the novel-writer is expected to distribute the several links of connection of his story along the ground at such regular intervals and in such conspicuous places as shall facilitate the reader's picking them up. The author must, moreover, well water and roll the way, and make it very straight, and be content if the gallopers over his course succeed in picking up some, though not all, of his story-links. The reader is essentially a Galloper. He, or, more generally, she, goes at the novel with dug-in spur and slashing whip and jerk of rein. The words are flown over as blades of grass, the chapter heads are passed as telegraph poles; away goes the galloper through page after page, faster, ever faster; there is no time for breathing or looking about; the descriptions are splashed through, the conversations skimmed, the moralisings skipped, the less important incidents are jumped; nothing is considered but how to reach the end as fast as possible, with a fair sample of links in the hand.

Now, consider! The writer has to write for these Gallopers. Is not the thought sufficient to take all heart out of him? An experienced writer who for a lifetime has catered for the reading public, and knows their proclivities as Sir John Lubbock knows earthworms, and Miss Ormerod knows blight, said to me: 'You will never become a popular novelist

until you alter your style. You set before the novel-reader moral problems hard to unravel, and make your terminations sad. The novel-reader wants *neither to be made to think nor to be made to feel.*' In a word, I must lay myself out for the Gallopers. Lay myself out for the Gallopers! Is there a form of degradation deeper to which a literary man can descend? I must let myself be watered and rolled as a tennis-ground, to be raced over by the hundred thousand with voided brains, vapid hearts, mule-witted, caprice-led, the purposeless, pulseless, nerveless, characterless, without a noble aim or a high ambition, without having felt the needle-point, and had an arc begun about their sheep-heads of the golden nimbus of self-abnegation.

No; I will not lay myself out to be trampled by the idle feet of the ignoble herd of Gallopers. Let them turn aside when they note my ruggedness. I will throw up ridges and sink pitfalls, and be humpy and lumpy. Let them take the profanation of their tread off earnest work.

It is not the thoughtful and those with pursuits in life who are the novel-readers; it is the vast multitude of the do-nothing, whose whole aim is distraction, who read to kill thought, to kill healthy feeling, serious purpose, good resolution, generous impulse—to kill God's precious gift of Time. Shall I lay myself out for such as they? I can understand Faust selling his soul to the devil for youth; or the architect of Cologne Minster for fame, or many another for wealth. But there is an infamy worse than that, and that is the sale to the Galloping novel-reader. Asmodeus, Mephistopheles, Satan, call him what you will, is an *Intelligence*; but the modern novel-reader, Gwendoline or Edith, or Mabel or Florence, whatever her name be, is a soap-bubble, void of everything but an evanescent exterior in iridescence. Lay myself out as a rolling-ground for these bubbles, blown along by the wind! God forbid! I would tear myself to pieces with my own hands rather than stoop to such baseness.

So—if I choose to force uncomfortable thoughts on my readers' minds—I will. If I choose to end my story unhappily—I will. I consider my own standards, and measure my work by them.

In the 'Compère Mathieu,' a French story of last century, the penultimate chapter shows us the hero in prison, brought there by a logical sequence of events, chained hand and foot, with the gallows preparing for him outside the jail In the

final chapter we are abruptly introduced to the compère at large, opulent, esteemed, and wealthy. The reader asks naturally, 'But how has this sudden transformation come about?' The author answers: 'I know no more than do you. My publisher told me that readers desire a novel to end happily, so I have ended mine happily. If the termination does not fit on to the events that go before, that is your affair, not mine.'

I will not say that my publishers and my readers are so exacting as to force me to do this; but they hit me very hard on another point. Both insist on a story being three volumes in length, or sixty chapters. Now, when Richardson wrote, he was allowed to occupy seven volumes with the affairs of Sir Charles Grandison, and of Clarissa Harlowe, and so leisurely to unfold his story and develop his characters. We authors now have not this liberty, and we are forced to crush our story into less than half that length. To do this, we are obliged to do our work imperfectly; we cannot follow the thread of the story evenly to the end, and show every stage in the history of our heroes and heroines. As characters are moulded and grow, we want time and leisure to exhibit the growth and indicate the process of modelling; but we have our hands tied by the inexorable system of three volumes. My readers—I am not addressing the Gallopers, whom I have scared away, and who are careering wildly, purposelessly elsewhere, kicking up their heels at me, as the ass at the sick lion—my readers—my few left, who are also my special friends—must excuse me if I am forced to carry them hastily over a twelvemonth, and to put into their hands some of the links of the chain, without many words.

Mr. Sellwood has been consecrated Bishop of Bodmin; and Mr. Cornellis has married the old lady, Miss Otterbourne, and is engaged plucking his goose, and lining his nest with her feathers. Mary Cable is growing up into a tall, beautiful girl, with eyes so blue and full of sun, that when she looks into the face of a man, he is dazzled, as if looking into the summer sky. The children are all grown, and they are all, moreover, vastly improved by the teaching they have received at the cottage from Josephine. But as to any approximation between their father and Josephine, there was none apparent; in that particular all was where it was.

Mary was the pride and joy of her father's heart. He loved all his children, but he was most proud of Mary, and

justly; her equal was not to be found thereabouts. That the young men looked after her and admired her, was right; it was her due, but, thought Richard, she shall be given to none of them. Not one of them deserves such a treasure. Cable continued at his business. With seven girls to provide for he must make a good deal of money, and all the money he made, he put away in the Duchy Bank, paying off in instalments his debt on the house. His improved position brought him more in contact with the people of St. Kerian than before when he was a poor stone-breaker on the roadside. His sourness disappeared, but in its place came pride. He spoke with the farmers and tradesmen, and they respected him, his talents, his practical good sense; but the barrier between them was not wholly broken down. He had no intention that it should be. Towards his own children, he had always been kind, and indeed indulgent; but the change in his temper, his hardness, sternness, bitterness towards those without, had gradually and imperceptibly affected his conduct towards his own within his household. He was kind, indeed, and indulgent still; but he lacked now what he had possessed of old, when he had had a childlike spirit, that perception of the requirements of joyous children's souls, full of exuberant life, which is that which endears elders to their children. If he would have made his daughters happy in his society, he should have sought happiness in himself, laid up there a store of it, from which to distribute to all who sought it at his hands. But instead, in the granary of his heart was a harvest of much ill seed.

One day, Mrs. Cable said to him when he was alone: 'I don't know what you think about it, Richard, but it is right that you should know that young Walter Penrose is mightily taken up with Mary. He's a fine fellow, and nobody can say a bad word of him. He has been some few years in Launceston, and now he is home again, and is likely to follow in his father's shop, after the old blacksmith gives up. As children, they have always had a liking to each other, and now he is here, I see he is after Mary. In church, it seems as though he could not keep his eyes off her; and whenever she goes into the village, he is sure to be in front of the blacksmith's shop to have a talk with her. She is very young yet, only seventeen; but—she must marry some day; and if you see no reasons against it, they might come to an understanding, and wait a twelvemonth.'

Then Cable's wrath foamed up. 'I do see reasons against it,' he said. 'I see what this means. Because I have worked and made money, and the St. Kerian people can't break into the bank and rob me of my money there, they set their sons on to follow my girls. I suppose the saddler's son, and the cobbler's boy, and the miller's, and the chimney-sweep's, if there were one, would all be looking for a seventh of my earnings, by snapping up one of my daughters, and so I should have moiled and toiled for St. Kerian folk, that they might spend.'

'But if the girls should like the lads. There is nothing against Walter Penrose; and I believe that Mary——'

'It is enough that I will not have it,' said Cable impatiently. 'She likes what I like, and has no desire beyond my will.'

One Sunday afternoon, after church service, old Penrose the blacksmith came out through the graveyard alongside of Cable. The girls walked behind, Mary with Martha; then the twins Effie and Jane, who were inseparable; and then the rest. The blacksmith was a fine man, broad-shouldered, big-handed, with very black eyes, but soft as velvet, and black hair the colour of the culm in his smithy—now, however, dusted with gray, as though ash had got among it. Instead of turning away at the gate to go to his home, he walked on with Cable. He did not live adjoining his smithy. The shop was on the road to Red Windows. Penrose talked a good deal; Cable answered, but was not a great speaker. All the better company—he was a good listener. Penrose talked about this and about that, and Cable nodded. He was wondering why the blacksmith accompanied him beyond his own house.

Presently Penrose said: 'Well, Mr. Cable, I reckon we're getting on in life, and want to see the young people settled. I know my missus be mad set on it, and I should be glad to have my son fixed here. He knows his trade, and there's plenty of work to keep both him and me.'

Cable jerked his head impatiently.

'My Walter is a proper lad; though I'm his father, I say it. You may look round St. Kerian and you'll hardly find a better; and the maiden he fancies——'

Then Cable stood still and turned, and looked down the road; he saw the little group that followed had been invaded. Young Walter Penrose was there, between Martha and Mary;

but his eyes and his words were directed only to Mary. All the blood in Cable's body spurted to his face, and his eyes glared like the blacksmith's forge when the bellows were in full blast. 'What do you mean?' he asked hoarsely.

'I mean this,' answered Penrose, 'that my Walter has set his heart on your Mary, and I reckon the maiden is not contrary. I'm agreeable.'

The colour went out of Cable's face; his lips assumed a livid and bitter appearance. 'Indeed,' he said, 'you are agreeable, are you? *I'm not.*' He turned; he had reached the gate to his garden; and he beckoned the girls to come on. He saw the blacksmith shake his head as he met his son; then he saw the colour disappear from Mary's cheek, and when she came to the gate her head was drooping, and, if he could have seen her eyes, he would have seen them full of tears.

After that, it seemed as though a bar of ice had formed between him and his eldest daughter—a bar which no sun-ray of love could melt. The gentle Mary said not a word. She was meek, obedient, docile as ever; but she did not meet her father's eye with her former frank smile, nor seek his society unsolicited.

Martha became petulant, pouted, and seemed to harbour a wrong, and resent it. Effie and Jane, the twins, looked on him with shyness, and when he came upon them laughing and talking, they became silent, and answered his questions with manifest timidity. Had his children ceased to love him? No; but they had begun to think of him as one who might stand between them and perfect happiness, one who might spoil their brightest schemes.

Cable became more morose. He watched Mary. He saw that she was unhappy; that she was becoming pale and thin; the joy of her life seemed withered, her eyes had lost their sparkle, and the dimple rarely formed now about her lips. 'I see what it is,' said Cable to himself. 'She will not forget that young Penrose, till she has found some one else to regard. I'll talk to Jacob Corye.' So he rode over to the 'Magpie' at Pentargon.

Mr. Corye was a prosperous man. Cable, who had had such close dealings with him, knew that he had put by a good deal of money. Moreover, Cable could not forget the debt he owed to Corye for having put him on the road to make his fortune. Corye owned a very considerable farm, as well as

the 'Magpie' inn. Of late, he had purchased a second farm, and helped by Cable, he was fast becoming the most prosperous yeoman of his district. He kept on the inn more out of habit than for necessity. Shortly after this visit to the 'Magpie,' Jacob Corye and his son Joshua were invited to supper at Red Windows, and then Cable and his two elder daughters were invited to spend an evening at Pentargon. Little Bessie had been failing of late, complaining of her back, looking pinched in face, white and frail.

'I have asked Mr. and Mrs. Corye,' said Richard Cable, 'to let Bessie go to them for a bit. Do you not think, mother, that the sea air may brace her up? You see here we have our backs to the winds that blow over the Atlantic; but at Pentargon she will draw them into her lungs, fresh off the water.'

'No doubt it will do her good,' answered Mrs. Cable. 'But who is to be there with her?'

'Mary or Martha.'

'But Mary or Martha cannot stay there long, and I think you should give Bessie six weeks, or, better, a couple of months by the sea, before the winter sets in.'

'Mary cannot remain at Pentargon above a fortnight.'

'Then,' said Mrs. Cable, and looked her son hard in the eyes, 'let *her* go with the child. She will care for her—as a mother; and it will do her good also. She is looking weak and frail, as if she were wasting away. Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, and the body breaks down under a sick heart.'

'Make what arrangements you will, but do not consult me,' said Richard. 'Jacob and I have a fine scheme on hand. It was his notion, but he did not see his way to getting it clearly worked out till I helped him. It is to build a large hotel on the cliffs, and to advertise it well; and then there will be streams of people come there all the summer and autumn for the splendid air and scenery. There is to be a flight of steps cut in the rock down to the bay, where there will then be a first-class bathing-place. Jacob will make many thousand pounds by the speculation, see if he does not, and I shall venture my savings in the same. It is sure to answer.'

'You think of nothing save making money,' sighed Mrs. Cable.

Now, occasionally, on Sundays, young Joshua Corye came over to church at St. Kerian, and walked back with the Cable

girls as far as the gate, when Richard asked him to step in and have tea with the party before riding home to the 'Magpie.' Joshua came over ostensibly to bring Richard tidings of his little Bessie, who was at Pentargon, and to beg she might stay on there. The child was not well, weak, but ceased to complain, and enjoyed the fresh air. The young person who was with her was most attentive and gentle with the feeble child.

'I don't want to hear about her,' said Cable. 'Tell me about Bessie; and what your father has done further about the hotel. I've a notion, tell him, that it must be called "Hotel Champagne Air," because the air you breathe on those cliffs goes sparkling and effervescing down your throat into your lungs. And, I fancy, the name would draw.'

Young Joshua Corye was a steady, decent young man, with a very fresh-coloured round face and small brown eyes. So fresh-coloured were his cheeks that if they had been skinned, they could not have been redder. He was a dull young man; he could talk of harriers and badger-hunting, and rat-catching and rabbit-shooting, and boating, but of nothing else. He always wore very tight half-trousers, half-breech, buttoned over the calf from the knee to the ankle.

Cable was very keen on the idea of the Champagne Air Hotel, and he had pitched on Joshua Corye for Mary, because he was quite sure the hotel would prove a vast success. Old Jacob would pocket a great deal of money, and the fortunes of the young people would be made. Of late, batches of knapsacked young men and gangs of athletic old maids had taken to walking along the north-west coast of Devon and Cornwall, and the accommodation was scant for visitors. Cable schemed a coach in connection with the Exeter and Launceston coach, which would carry passengers right on to Champagne Air Hotel. It might be made a sanatorium, a great bathing establishment. The possibilities of making money out of it were numerous. Jacob Corye had his own farms, and could supply his hotel from his farms, and so create a market in his midst.

Now that Bessie was at the 'Magpie,' Richard did not go over and see her; but he was eager to hear tidings of her. Before she went there, he frequently rode over; now, not at all.

Cable was sitting in his summer-house one warm day, when he observed young Walter Penrose coming up the hill

with some iron staples he had been lengthening for a farmer beyond Red Windows. At the same time, Mary was coming down the road with a pitcher for water to a spring where the water was softer than that of the well, and better suited for her flowers. Richard Cable watched them with some curiosity. They were both unaware that his eye was on them. They passed each other very close to him. He could see Walter's dark eyes full of entreaty, fixed on Mary, and that he let fall some of the staples. Mary hung her head; she did not speak, she did not look at him; but she went on to the spring. A moment after, when Walter had turned the corner and was out of sight, Cable heard her sink upon the step of his summer-house and burst into sobs. She had laid her head against the doorpost with her hands over her eyes, and she wept there for a quarter of an hour; her father listening, agitated within, unwilling to come forth and reveal that he had witnessed her sorrow.

He was troubled for some days after that; he was half-tempted to relent, but his pride stood in the way. He would not go to old Penrose, cap in hand, and ask him to accept Mary as his daughter-in-law. Besides, he and old Corye had settled between them that Joshua and Mary were to be installed together in Champagne Air Hotel.

'Mother,' he said, 'there's going to be a confirmation in St. Kerian's Church, and the bishop—our old parson at Hanford—is coming. There is not one of my girls as yet confirmed; they shall be confirmed together, all seven.—Don't tell me that Mary is too old, nor Bessie too young. It is my wish. And, mind you send to that person who does the needlework, and tell her to get ready seven white dresses for the seven girls, before the bishop comes. I don't know, but perhaps he'll be pleased to confirm the seven little maids, all of whom he baptised at Hanford; and I'm not sure but I shall be pleased to see him—if he's not forgotten me.'

'Richard,' said Bessie Cable, 'there is a white silk dress that *she* wore at her wedding. She gave it to me to do what I wished with, to cut it up for the children if I liked. Shall I use that for one of them?'

Then Richard Cable's face became red as blood.

'No!' he said. 'Do not touch it. Seven white robes, and this—an eighth.'

CHAPTER LVI.

A LAST TRIAL.

JOSEPHINE sat on a bench behind the 'Magpie' with little Bessie in her arms, looking out seaward. There was a good deal of cloud in the sky, but torn, with intervals of sky, through which the sun poured a rain of white light over the water. Seen from the great height of the cliffs, the Atlantic looked like a silvery-gray quivering sheet of satin, with folds of gray, and flashes and flakes and furls of brilliant white. About the headland of Pentargon, or King Arthur's Head, the breakers tossed, and the water was converted into milk. In the bay, under the cliffs, the gulls were noisy, and their voices, in laughter or objurgation, were re-echoed by the black precipices, multiplied and magnified, till, looking on, one wondered that so much and such strange sound should come from the flying flakes of white that glanced here and there. The wind was from the west; it had not brushed land since it left Labrador; but it had lost its chill and harshness in passing over these endless tracts of ocean; though it blew so strongly that it lifted and would have carried away an unsecured hat, there was a warmth and mellowness in it that divested it of all severity. It was like the reproof of a mother, charged with love and working betterment.

The horizon was full of change and mystery, now dark as a mourning-ribbon, now clear and white as that of a bride; now it was a broad belt, then a single thread; now melting into the sky, then sharp against it. Far away, it was blotted out by a blur of falling rain, or shadow from a cloud; and here again by a veil of sunlight that was let down between the clouds, hiding all behind.

The air was full of music—the roar of the sea, in varied pulsations, and the pipe and flute among the grass and sea-bent on the down, and the hiss of the sand-grains that were caught and turned over and rolled along in the bare patches. Near the extreme verge of the precipice, where the soil was crumbly, and a false step would plunge into destruction, the sheep were lying at ease, dozing, waking now and then, and approaching the sweet grass to nibble, then going back to the edge of the precipice to sleep again; for the sheep have as-

certained that, with a wind on shore, the edge of the cliff is the most sheltered spot; the wind hurling itself against the crag, is beaten upwards and curls over, and falls further inland, just as might a wave. Consequently, in a heavy gale, partial stillness of air is found at the cliff edge.

Josephine wore a dark-blue dress, and over her head was a handkerchief, pinned beneath her chin. Bessie lay, silent in her lap, with her head on Josephine's bosom, and her thin-drawn face looking seaward. Josephine also was silent; she also was looking seaward. Her face was greatly changed since we first saw her on the lightship. Then she was girlish, with mischief and defiance in her splendid eyes, and life glowing in her veins, showing through her olive skin. Then, there was promise in her of a handsome woman, full of spirit and self-will; of a clever woman, who could keep a circle of men about her, charmed, yet wincing, at her wit and humour. But the Josephine who sat on the bench of the 'Magpie' was not the same. The promise was unfulfilled. The girlishness was gone. The self-confidence had made way for timidity; the defiance in her great dark eyes was exchanged for appeal. There was no more mischief lurking anywhere, in the eyes, in the dimples of the cheek, in the curve of the lips; but there was an amount of nobleness, and mixed with gentleness, great resolution, marked in all the features. It was like the nature of that west wind that she inhaled—strong yet tender, direct yet infinitely soft, soothing, healing, loving, strengthening—and pure.

Josephine had gone through a long ordeal, to which she had subjected herself, and from which there seemed no issue. Spiritually, morally, it had done her good; but it had not advanced her towards that end which she sought—at least so it seemed to her. She was no nearer to Richard Cable than she had been. If he conferred on her a boon, it was in such a manner as to rob it of all the grace of a gift, and of all the hope it might carry.

What a fascination there is in looking at the sea! Even the most vulgar soul is affected by it. On the sea-border we are on the frontier of the infinite. The sight of the ocean is like the sound of music calling forth the soul from the thoughts of to-day, from its cage-life to freedom, and an unutterable yearning after what is not—the Perfect. At the sight of the sea, all the aspirations long down-trodden, long forgotten, lift up their hands again, and stretch out of the dust

of sordid life. All the sorrows of the past, scarred over, break out and bleed again, the blood running down, drop by drop, warm, soothing, yet painful. All the generous thoughts that have been pared down and disfigured into mean acts, shake off their disguise, reassume their original dignity, and master us. All the unrealities, the affectations, which have bound us about, break away, and we stand forth fresh and natural and true. All the selfishness, the contraction of interest to one miserable point, discovers its unworthiness, and the heart swells with a charity that has no bounds.

I have seen those who have taken novels out on the downs to read, sit hour by hour looking seaward, with the novel unread on the lap. The sea was the great reality, the infinite truth waking up in their minds a thousand thoughts and emotions, drawing them out, withering the base, and bracing the true. It showed them in their own selves all the elements of the noblest romance; it revealed to them the true hero or heroine, in themselves, in the ideal, towards which they should ever strive, and in the pursuit of which work out the grandest of romances, which is not a romance, but a great reality.

So Josephine sat looking seaward, and thinking without knowing that she thought, and on her lap lay little Bessie thinking, as her eyes looked seaward, and not knowing that she was thinking. In Goethe's ballad the Erle-king calls to the child, uttering promises; and the father who bears the child does not hear the voice, and shudders at the thought that his child may be lured away. The sea—the infinite sea, called to the child and to her who held the child with a voice that both heard—a voice full of promise, but full of mystery as to what it promised.

The bench on which Josephine sat was made of old wreck-timber, and at the sides stood the curved ribs of a ship or boat, meeting overhead, and boarded in, so as to form a rude arbour. The sides cut off the wind, when it did not blow directly on shore, and the seat was a meeting-place for the coastguard. As Josephine sat here, a man came round the corner of the house and approached the place where she sat. She did not see him because of the planks that framed in the seat. Five minutes after, another man appeared in like manner round the other angle of the house, and came towards her arbour, and he also was unseen as he drew nigh, for the same reason. The first who came was Richard Cable, and he

came to see Bessie. As already said, he had not been to the 'Magpie' since she had been there; but of late a great uneasiness had come over him. He remembered what his mother had said, as he moved to Red Windows—that he laid his foundations in his first-born, and set up the gates in his youngest. In his troubled mind the fancy rose that he had lost his first-born—her love, at least, by thwarting her, and ruined her happiness; and that he was about to lose his poor little Bessie in another way. He had struggled against this impression, against his desire to see her, how she was progressing, to assure himself that the fear that weighed on him was unfounded. At length he had ridden over; and having heard of Mrs. Corye that Josephine was with the child on the bench, he went in search of her; very reluctant to meet Josephine, and very desirous to see his child. He stood screened by the side of the bench, gray wooden wreck-timber planks, carved over with initials, listening for Bessie's voice, waiting for her to run out on the down, when he would go after her, catch her up in his arms, and carry her off, without having to face Josephine.

At first he doubted whether those he sought were there; but there was a round knot-hole in one of the planks, and on looking through that, he saw Josephine, and the little girl leaning on her bosom. Josephine's profile was clean cut against the sky, noble, fine, and beautiful; but he could not see from that silhouette how changed the face was. As he thus stood now looking through the hole at Josephine and Bessie, then, caught by the fascination of the sea, looking out seaward, losing himself in dreams full of trouble and pain and froth and brine, there passed a flicker of sunlight over the rolling ocean, like a skein of floss-silk of the purest white blown along the gray surface, and caught and spread by the inequalities, and then lifted and carried on again by the wind. He looked at this till it disappeared, and as he looked, his sense of time passed away, and he knew not how long he had been standing there, unable to muster courage to present himself before those who sat so near him and yet were parted from him. As he thus stood, leaning back against the wall, another man came round the house, from the opposite side, and ensconced himself on the other side of the arbour. This was Mr. Cornellis. He had driven up to the 'Magpie' five minutes after the arrival of Cable, and had inquired for Josephine, not by name, but as 'the young person staying

here with one of Cable's children. He had been to St. Kerian, and had there learned where she was and what she was doing; and had come on to the 'Magpie' after her. But as he had heard from Mrs. Corye that Richard had himself gone in the same direction a few minutes before, he contented himself with slipping round the corner and planting himself beside the bench, screened by the side, where he thought he might stand unobserved and hear what took place before he showed himself.

So Josephine sat on the old bench with the ribs of a wreck arching over her, planked in on both sides, and the sick child on her lap, both silent, both lost in a day-dream; and on each side of her, unknown to her, stood a man with whom she was intimately allied, and yet from both of whom she was widely parted—her father and her husband. She knew nothing of their proximity; she had not heard their steps on the turf; and the wind that blew into the arbour, filled it and whirled about in it, and hummed and piped and broke out into song, and sank into sobs, and pulled at the timbers, making them creak, and sought out their rifts, to whistle through them, so that she could hear no slight sound outside that rude orchestral shell.

Mr. Cornellis leaned back against the wall, with his hands behind him, as a protection to his coat, and looked out to sea; but on him, on him alone of the four, the fascination had no power. The same wondrous expanse, the same travelling glories and obscurities, the same mysterious depths and distances, and glimpses into further far-away, and screens veiling the far-off, the same call of the many-voiced ocean in one great harmonious song—passing over the mind of Mr. Cornellis, not even as a breath over a mirror that leaves a momentary trace—it affected him not at all, for the faculty was dead in him, if it had ever existed—the faculty of responding to the hidden things of nature. One deep calleth to another deep, sang David, sitting on the hill-slope of Bethlehem, looking away west to the Mediterranean, as the sight of the sea woke in his soul a consciousness of the Divine, of the Eternal; and the deep sea still calls to the deep in every human soul that has depth; only to the shallow puddles does it call in vain.

Where the planks were joined on the side where stood Mr. Cornellis, a little rift remained. The planks had not fitted originally, or had warped after having been nailed to the

stanchions. Through this cleft he looked, and he could see his daughter. He could not see the face of the child on her bosom; but he saw the head over her arm, and the golden hair in dimpled waves flowing down upon Josephine's dark-blue dress, and the parting on the top of the head, and just a strip of white brow.

Then both men heard the clear, beautiful voice of Josephine raised in song:

O wie wogt es, wie wogt es, so schön auf der Fluth!

and looking in, saw her swaying the sick Bessie in her arms to the rhythm of the melody.

Cable saw more—he saw the delicate, transparent hand of his child raised, stroking the cheek of her nurse, and then—the song of the Mermaid was interrupted as Josephine turned her lips and kissed the little hand.

Josephine did not continue the song, but said: 'Bessie, can you kneel up on my lap, and let me tell you something?'

The child did not answer in words; she had become very silent of late—the closeness, the reserve of her father was showing itself as an inherited characteristic in her. But though she did not speak, she acted: she raised her head, put her hands on Josephine's shoulders, and knelt on her lap, opposite her, still resting a hand on each shoulder of her nurse. The wind blew in, took her golden hair, and swept it forward towards the face of Josephine; and Josephine was obliged to make her hold her head away, lest the hair should spread itself over her face and obscure her eyes and prevent her from speaking.

'My dear Bessie,' she said in a voice full of gentleness and sweetness, and with a tremble in it that now never left it, 'I must tell you something. I cannot let you coax me, and pat my cheek and kiss me, as you so often do, without your knowing to whom you show this love.'

Then Cable's brows knitted. Josephine was going to betray the trust imposed on her, to tell the child that she was her stepmother, and to implant in Bessie's mind the suspicion that her father had been unjust to one who was kind and good. He took a step forward to leave his hiding-place and prevent the disclosure; but he thought better of his resolution, and desisted. He must not provoke a scene which would agitate his child.

'Bessie,' said Josephine, 'I do not think your father would

wish you to be so dear and sweet to me, to let me think you loved me, and remain in ignorance of what should be told.'

'She is false also,' thought Cable; 'she *knows* I do not wish it.'

'My darling,' continued Josephine, 'look me full in the face—look with your blue eyes straight into mine, whilst I tell you something, and I shall be able to read in your eyes what you think.' She paused, and drew a long breath. 'You know, my pretty pet,' said Josephine, 'how you suffer in your back, how that you have always—that is, since you can remember—been a sickly child; that you have not been able to play with your sisters like those who are strong; that you have had much pain to bear, and many sleepless nights. You know that now you are very weak and soon tired, and you do not care to talk much or take exercise, but to lie quiet on my breast and look at the sea. My dear, I also like to look at the sea; and the sea has been talking to me, and telling me to be true—always true, and deal openly, and never hide what should be known, and reap what has not been sown by me. That is why I want to tell you this thing now, which has been kept secret from you. Do you know why you are infirm and in pain, with a suffering life instead of a life joyous and painless?'

'I do not know,' said Bessie.

'No one has told you?'

The child shook her head, and as she did so, the wind caught her yellow hair and wrapped it about her face, so that she was obliged to let go her hold of Josephine's shoulder with one hand, to thrust back her curls behind her ears.

'May I have your blue kerchief with the white spots,' asked Bessie, 'to tie over my head? The hair blows into my eyes, and I cannot see you.'

Then Josephine unknotted the kerchief from her own head—the knot was under her chin—and tied it over the golden head of little Bessie. How was it that, in some dim way, the sight of that blue white-spotted kerchief was familiar to Richard? 'It is an old pocket-handkerchief of your father's,' said Josephine, 'and covers you best, as his love is spread over your head—not over mine.'

Then Richard remembered the handkerchief, and the mockery with which once Josephine had spoken of it.

'When your father left Hanford, where he once lived—that was when you were quite a baby, and you remember

nothing about it—then he left this kerchief behind, and I have kept it ever since.'

'Were you there then?'

'Yes.'

'Why did papa leave that place for St. Kerian?'

'Because, in the first place, the cottage at St. Kerian came to him from your great-uncle; and in the next, he had very painful associations with Hanford.'

'You knew him there?'

'Yes—and it was there that happened the sad accident which has made you a sufferer.'

Cruel, cruel Josephine! always wounding! She was about now to tell his daughter how he had let her fall when he was drunk, and so to turn away the child's heart from him. Thus were his mother's words likely to come true; he had thrown away the heart of his eldest, and the heart of his youngest was to be plucked from him. He set his elbow against the wall, and his fingers he thrust through his hair, and he looked with eyes that gleamed with remorse and anger through the knot-hole at Josephine.

Then she went on, in her low voice, that quivered as sunlight on the surface of water: 'Look me well in the face, dear Bessie, and do not take your eyes off mine. You shall know the truth now, from my lips. The reason why you have a bad back and an unhappy life is this—that you were let fall on a hard stone floor, when you were a baby, and your bones soft and not full set. That is the secret that has not been told you. You were born sound and strong as Mary and Jane and Effie and Martha, and the rest; and now you would be able to run about like the rest, and be strong, and have no pain, but for that fall.—Well?' The great brown eyes of Josephine looked into the blue eyes of the child, inquiringly. 'Have you nothing to ask? Do you not want to know where the guilt lies of ruining all your sweet and precious life?'

Bessie shook her head, and her golden hair did not flutter, but the end of the blue, white-spotted kerchief, with R. C. marked on it, flapped in the wind,

The brow of Cable was drawn and corded like rope, and his knees shook under him with convulsive agitation. Should he now step forth at this supreme moment, and arrest the word on the heartless, venomous woman's mouth?

Then in the same low, quivering tones, but yet so clear that Richard lost not one word, Josephine went on: 'It was

my doing, Bessie. I—and I alone am to blame for all your suffering; and that is also why your father left Hanford—to take you away from me.'

Not a wink, not a contraction of the iris in the child's blue orbs.

'Some one,' said Josephine, 'said to me that when you were told this you would hate me, and raise your little fists and beat my eyes till they were blind with blood and tears.'

Then little Bessie let go her hold of Josephine's shoulders, and threw her arms about her neck, and platted the white fingers in her dark hair, and kissed her passionately on the eyes, and then laid her little head on one of Josephine's shoulders, and looked up into her eyes and said: 'But—I am glad it was you, and I love you a thousand times better.'

Out seaward was a long, hard-edged, black roller coming on to the shore, looking as black and hard as the iron rocks against which it was about to fling itself. But at one point the crest broke and turned into foam; at another point far away in the same wave-crest, another white foam-head appeared; and from each side the foam ran inward, and it seemed as if they must meet and turn the whole long wave into one white breaker. But no! There heaved up between the approaching lines of foam a yeasty heap of water, into which the advancing wave dissolved, and lost its continuity. Richard looked seaward at this roller. Little matters determine our actions in moments of indecision. Had the foam-lines met, he would have stepped forward, and an immediate reconciliation might have ensued. But the failure in the wave broke down the dawning desire for reunion, and he stole away back to the inn without a word.

As he left, Mr. Cornellis stood forth, and saw him go, and in another moment confronted his daughter and Bessie. But Cable went into the 'Magpie' and ordered his horse. Then said Mrs. Corye to him: 'I suppose you can't carry a parcel? The young woman has done all the seven confirmation dresses, and they are tied up in a parcel, ready to be sent to St. Kerian.'

'Give them to me,' said Cable; 'I will take them in front of my saddle.'

When Josephine caught sight of her father, she sprang up with a cry of pleasure, and with a flushed face, placed Bessie on the seat and ran to him with outstretched arms. She

was so poverty-stricken in love, that she hailed with delight the appearance of one to whom she was tied with the tenderest bands. 'O papa! how kind of you to come and see me! Oh! how is dear Aunt Judith? I have not seen her for so long, and I do love her so! O papa! this is a pleasure.' She held his hand in both hers and wrung it, and kissed it, and wept with delight.

'I have come to fetch you home,' said Mr. Cornellis. 'Your Aunt Judith is expecting you, and I want you.'

'Papa!' exclaimed Josephine suddenly, 'you are in mourning—deep mourning. What has happened?'

'My dear, I have lost my wife. You know that I married Miss Otterbourne, who was twenty years older than myself. She has not lived long. The complete change in the modes of life, after she had settled into old-maidish ways, broke her up very quickly.'

'O papa, papa! And where are you now?'

'At Bewdley, my dear.'

'But that goes to Captain Sellwood.'

'Not at all. She had free disposal of her property, and she has left everything to me.'

'But—it is not fair.'

'I do not ask your opinion in this matter,' he said coldly; 'I have come to fetch you home. Judith is getting old and failing, and I want you to manage the house.'

'But—papa—I cannot leave.'

'Why not? Richard Cable will have nothing to say to you. Has he given you the least encouragement?'

She was silent.

'Do you know that he overheard all that passed between you and the child just now? Had he desired a reconciliation he would have sought it. He did not. He never will. Give up this absurd and hopeless Don Quixote pursuit, and come with me. I am now very well off. You were at Bewdley as a servant; you come back as mistress. I have packed off the worthless crew of domestics and hangers-on who preyed on the old lady. Come back with me. You have done more than was necessary to satisfy that fellow Cable; and as he still rejects you, show him proper pride, and leave him to himself.'

'Papa!'—she breathed fast—'you are rich now?'

'Yes, very.'

'Then, oh, do repay the insurance.'

He gave her a look, so evil, so full of rage and malice, that she turned sharply about to see Bessie.

He did not speak again; he went away without another word or look, and left without a parting message through the hostess.

Not so Cable.

When Josephine came in, Mrs. Corye pointed to the table, on which something was scrawled in chalk. 'Look there,' she said. 'He—I mean Cable—wrote that for you, and when you've read it, wipe it out.'

On the table was inscribed: 'Thursday—bring Bessie. Friday—confirmation.' That was all.

CHAPTER LVII.

THE FOUNDATION.

RICHARD CABLE scarcely slept all night. He thought of many things. He thought of what he had seen and overheard at Pentargon. He saw in the darkness the arms of his child round the neck, interlaced with the hair of Josephine, her head tied up in his blue white-spotted kerchief, lying on her shoulder, looking up into the pale face of her nurse, with a soul of love and forgiveness streaming out of those blue eyes. But he thought of something beside—of the plan he had made for Mary; and he was by no means sure that she would be well content with the arrangement. One circumstance had, however, occurred to make his way easier. When a young man has been refused, his self-love receives a wound more severe than his heart, and he is then impelled to do some act which will retrieve his lost self-respect. A man who has been refused, or jilted, is ready to propose to the next girl he sees; and no sooner was Walter Penrose aware that his suit for Mary Cable was unacceptable, than he offered himself to Sarah Jones. He did not care particularly for Sarah; but he did not choose to have it thought in the place that he was a rejected lover; and he did not choose that the Cables should consider him as inconsolable. As this engagement was hurried, the wedding was also hurried; Sarah Jones had no desire to let Walter slip through her fingers by delay, and Walter wished

to have his fate settled irrevocably as speedily as possible, out of defiance to the Cables, who had slighted his pretensions.

After breakfast one morning, Richard Cable said to Mary: 'Child, when you have cleared away, come to me into the summer-house; I have a word to say to you of some importance.'

'Father, I hear the bishop arrives to-morrow.'

'Yes; but I am not going to speak to you about the bishop.'

'And the confirmation is on Friday.'

'Yes; I suppose so; but that is not the matter.'

He saw her and Martha exchange looks. Martha put up her lip and looked sulky. Martha had inherited her father's stubbornness. She and Mary clung to each other, as the twins who intervened between Mary and her were fast friends and inseparable. Martha looked up to Mary with passionate love, regarded her as the most beautiful and perfect girl in the world; fought her battles, resented every slight shown her, or supposed slight, as she would bridle with pride and pleasure at every acknowledgment of her sister's excellence.

Cable went to his summer-house and smoked a pipe. Before he had finished it, he heard a timid foot on the gravel, and in another moment Mary stood in the open door.

'Come in,' said Cable. 'What is the matter? Upset because you have broken a plate? Bah! Fourpence will set that to rights. Come inside, Mary dear; I must have a serious word with you.'

She entered, trembling, and with changing colour, changing as fast as the flushes in the evening clouds. Tears sparkled on her eyelashes, as raindrops on fern-leaves in the hedges at morn.

'What is the matter, child? Why are you frightened? Your father will never do anything to displease you. You can rely on that. His whole care is for your happiness, and it is for your happiness that he is now arranging.'

She raised her blue eyes; they were swimming with tears, so full of tears that he could not read through the watery veil what they said. He could not say for a moment any more. His pipe did not draw as it should; he unscrewed it and blew through the nozzle. His blood throbbed in his temples. He was vexed with his mother because she had refused to speak to Mary about his purpose, and relieve him of the irksome obligation. 'Mary,' he said, after a long pause,

during which she stood before him with folded hands and lowered eyes—'Mary, I suppose you have formed a rough guess what my business is with you?'

She made no answer with her lips. Had he looked up, he might have read the reply in the pain-twitching lips of his child and in her shifting colour.

'Can you give a guess of what I have to say?'

Then she held up her head, looked full through her tears in her father's face, and answered: 'Yes, dear father, I know—I can guess what you want to—to say. But—O father! father dearest—spare me this time—do not say it.'

'Spare you this time?' echoed Cable. 'What is the meaning of these words? When have I not been considerate and kind to you—to you above the rest?'

No answer.

He waited; but as he received no reply, without looking in her face, he began again: 'Mary.'

'Father,' she said, 'let me——' But her voice failed her, and she put her hands over her eyes.

'You do not know what is good for you, my child,' he said. 'You are indeed still very young, scarcely eighteen, and yet—— But never mind; your mother was married early. If I have doubted for a moment whether I acted rightly on a former occasion, my doubts have vanished to-day. That young fellow, who once took a fancy to you, is now—— Hark!'

At that moment the bells of the parish church began a glad peal. The wedding service was over that united Walter Penrose with Sarah Jones, and the ringers were sending the welcome from the church tower.

Then Mary raised her hands, clasped them over her head, uttering a piercing cry, and sank at her father's feet: 'Father! O my father! you have killed me!'

Cable caught her, and tried to raise her; but she twisted herself from his hands, and on her knees staggered round the summer-house, clasping her ears, to shut out the reverberation of the wedding bells.

Cable went after her; he caught her in his arms and held her; but she slipped down on the floor again and lay her length on it, beating the floor with her head, as one mad, and then scrambling up on her knees and throwing herself in a heap in the corner. 'O father! my father!' she cried, 'this is your doing! Walter does not love any one but me; and I

—I love, and can love none other. I shall never, never marry now! You have made me miserable—you have broken my heart.'

Richard Cable was as a man turned to stone. He could not speak; he tried, but his voice failed. He put his hand to his brow, and a deep groan escaped his breast. All at once he stood up; he could not breathe in the summer-house. He was stunned by the reverberation of those St. Kerian bells, beating in upon his brain, from all the eight sides of his wooden house. He left Mary kneeling on the ground; he rushed forth. He opened his gate and hobbled down the road. He could not bear to face his children. He did not feel the ground under his feet; he was like a dreamer, falling, falling, touching nothing. The birds sang in the bushes, the holly leaves reflected the sun from their shining leaves on the hedge. Everything swam about him. He could not run because of his thigh, and he had not his stick, so he went painfully, lurching like a drunken man. He had pierced his best loved daughter's heart; he had robbed her of her happiness, alienated her from him for ever—he had laid the foundation in his first-born.

Whither was he going? He did not know himself. He wanted to be away from Red Windows, somewhere out of the sound of Mary's sobs, away from the reproachful eyes of her sisters; somewhere where he might be alone in his misery. There was one spot to which instinctively he gravitated—the old cob cottage. He did not consider that it had been given up to Josephine, or if he thought of that, he remembered she was away, and that, though she dwelt in it, it was now vacant. He did not rest till he reached it. The key was kept in the same secret place, the hole in the thatch, and when he put his hand there, he found the key. He opened the door and went in. He did not look about him; he saw the old armchair in the old place, and the table and the seven stools. The hearth was cold; the room was still, only a few flies humming in it. There were a few trifles that belonged to Josephine on the chimney-shelf and on the table; and to a crook in the ceiling hung a bunch of pink everlastings, head downward. He threw himself into the old chair, and folded his arms on his knees, and laid his head on his arms and wept.

How long he sat there he did not know; thoughts hot as molten metal flowed white and glaring through his brain.

Had he been happy in Red Windows? Was he not more miserable in his wealth than he had been in his poverty? What had his money done for him but steal his children's hearts from him, and seal up his perception of what was for their welfare? There, round the table, were the stools of his children, on which they had sat as little things, and eaten their frugal meals. How much better they had tasted seasoned with love, than the richer repasts at Red Windows strewn with verjuice.

Those bells! Those wedding bells were still ringing! Oh, what a happy day for him, had they rung for Mary's wedding! How content he might have been with her down in St. Kerian, near the smithy. Then every day he would have strolled into the village to see her and talk with the smith, his son-in-law. Now that was over. Mary's heart was broken. The bright future of the dearest being he loved had been dashed to pieces by his hand. Could she ever forgive him—him who had spoiled her entire future, blighted her whole life? How could he live in the same house with her whose happiness he had wrecked?

Then he remembered what he had witnessed on the cliff behind the 'Magpie'—he saw again the little head bound up in his blue kerchief, resting on Josephine's shoulder, looking up into her face, and saying: 'I am glad it was you, and I love you a thousand times better!'

O wondrous beauty of forgiveness! St. Luke's summer in the moral world, when a soft glory illumines the fading leaves and drooping vegetation, and makes the touch of decay and death seem the touch of perfect loveliness.

What was the worm at the root of all Cable's happiness, that which had robbed all his successes of satisfaction? Was it not the bitterness with which he had thought of Josephine, the savage determination with which he had stamped out every spark of relenting love, that had for a moment twinkled in his gloomy heart?

As he thus thought, he groaned. Then, suddenly, he was roused and touched by a hand. He looked up, bewildered. Jacob Corye the innkeeper stood before him with agitated, mottled face.

'You've heard it? It is true! We are all done for.'

Cable could not collect his senses at first.

'I came over at once, the moment the news reached me. I went up to Red Windows. Then I heard you had gone down

lane. Someone saw you come on here. I followed. Is it true? Tell me what you have heard. My God! this is frightful.'

'I do not understand you.'

'The Duchy Bank has failed—stopped payment. I had three thousand five hundred pounds in it. And you——?'

'Everything,' answered Cable.

'Just heard it. Could hardly believe it. I came over here. It is a frightful loss to me. Three thousand five hundred pounds! Why, I can never start the "Champagne Air Hotel."'

'It is my ruin,' said Cable. 'I owe money for Red Windows, and I have put my savings into shares in the bank as portions for my girls.' He put his hands over his brow and laughed fiercely. 'Naked came I into the world, and naked I shall go out. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; but I cannot and I will not say, Blessed be the name of the Lord.'

'Three thousand five hundred pounds!' groaned Corye. 'That takes pints of blood out of one's veins.'

'I am bled to death,' said Cable.

'Look here! What will become of Red Windows?'

'It will be sold over my head. I have not paid off; and I am a shareholder.'

'You have everything in the bank?'

'Every penny.'

'Look here, Uncle Dick,' said Corye. 'Under these circumstances, we must give up the "Champagne Air Hotel."'

'Yes.'

'And we must think no more of mating my Joshua and your Mary.'

'That is past,' said Cable.

'Three thousand five hundred pounds!' groaned Jacob. 'Well, I pity you. I can feel. I am cruel badly bitten.' Then he went away.

Richard Cable remained in the same position and in the same place. He did not return to Red Windows for his dinner. He sat, stunned with despair, rocking himself in his armchair, looking upon the white ashes of his first life, and the ashes of his second life. His first ambition had been realised, and had turned to dust when he grasped it. The second had been realised, and had failed him also. What was done could not be undone. He must return with his daughters to the poor cob cottage. The wealth was gone as

a dream—not a happy dream—a dream of disappointed ambition, of pride unsatisfied. It would have been better for him and his children if he had never left his stone-breaking, never separated himself from them. That episode of prosperity, like the episode of marriage with Josephine, had done nothing for him except unfit him for the life he had been accustomed to lead. He felt inclined in his misery to take his stone-breaker's hammer and break his daughters' hearts with it, one after another, and then die himself. Red Windows must be abandoned, and they must all accommodate themselves as best they could to the cottage, and cultivate again the three-cornered garden; and he must go along his rounds with the van of calves and droves of young stock, rebuilding slowly his broken-down fortune.

'Cursed be the day,' muttered Cable, 'that ever I dreamed that daring dream!'

His head was burning. He could not weep now; his eyes were fireballs. The fountain of tears in his heart was dry as an old cistern, and nothing lay at the bottom but grit and canker. One thing that embittered his misfortune most of all to him was the thought of how the St. Kerian folk, whom he had held aloof from, would rejoice over his misfortune. Those who had most fawned on him in his prosperity would now turn their heel upon him. How Penrose the blacksmith that day would laugh over his ill-luck, and bless his stars that his Walter had escaped union with one whom misfortune followed! How Tregurtha, from whom he had purchased Summerleaze, would rub his hands, and vow that the day had now come which he had long foretold, when Uncle Dick's pride would be brought low!

Then the strength of Richard Cable's character began to manifest itself again, as these galling visions presented themselves before him. It was true that he was a ruined man; but he had still the brains and the skill to make a new fortune by following the same course he had already pursued. As he began to think of the future, the present lost its intensity of bitterness. He felt that he still had in him sufficient energy to begin life for the third time; but he was shaken, and he could never hope to recover all that was now taken from him. There were other competitors stepping in where he had shown the way.

Whilst thus thinking, he heard the door open, and the blacksmith, Penrose, came in. 'Well, Uncle Dicky,' said the

smith, 'what be this bad news I've heard? The Duchy Bank gone scatt [broken] and all your savings lost?'

Cable nodded and sighed.

'Bless me,' said Penrose, 'that's a bad look-out for you. Have you nothing laid by elsewhere?'

Cable shook his head.

'By the powers!' said the blacksmith, 'I'm mighty sorry for you. I've been at the wedding of my boy, and I'm only sorry he weren't spliced to the other one. Your Mary would have suited me better than Sarah Jones. But it was not to be; so let the past lie covered with leaves. Sarah Jones brings some money with her; but she has a shrewish temper, if what folks say be true. I'd rather have had your Mary without a penny than Sarah with all her brass.—But there! what is done is done, and to-day the parson has hammered them together on the anvil, and there'll be no parting after that, whether they agree or not. As for her sharp tongue, he must learn to put up with it and turn its point with gentleness.'

Cable sighed and thought of his marriage with Josephine.

'Well, Uncle Dick,' continued Penrose, 'I've just seen Jacob Corye, who is badly hit. But he says you are worse bitten than he, and that there was nothing left for you and your maidens but the workhouse.'

Cable looked up ironically and said: 'No, not that.'

'No,' pursued the blacksmith; 'I knew it could not be so bad as that. Still, I thought I'd come on and see.—Corye said you were here taking on dreadfully about your loss, and like to do yourself an injury. Then an idea came into my head; it flashed up like a spark on red-hot iron. I came on, and here I find you.'

'Yes,' said Cable, 'here you find me.' He was not angry with Penrose for his intrusion. He felt that it was kindly meant, and the sympathy of the blacksmith touched him.

'Now, harky' to me,' said the blacksmith, lowering his voice. 'I know you well enough—a straight man as ever was. I reckon I'm a straight man too; and where I'm crooked, may God Almighty hammer me out of my crookedness with the hammer of adversity, straight again! But there—I've come to say that I've a matter of a couple of hundred pounds lying idle—thank heaven, not in a bank, but in my old woman's nightcap, and stuffed up the chimney in our bedroom—all in gold, and you're heartily welcome to

the loan of it as long as you like. You leave this door unlocked to-night, and I'll come along as if I were out to smoke, and blow off the drink I've had to take because of all the toasts and well-wishings, being my son's wedding day; and I'll come in here, nobody seeing, and I'll put the old woman's nightcap and its contents into thicky [yonder] oven, where you'll find it to-morrow morning, and nobody the wiser.—No words,' said Penrose, starting up. 'I reckon I hear steps coming. I'm wanted because the young people are off.'

Before Cable could recover his speech, for moved to the loss of words he was, Penrose was gone. At the same moment in came three other men, Tregurtha the farmer, Bonithon the saddler, and Hoskins the miller. Each looked at his fellow to speak. Tregurtha, nudged by the saddler and the miller, after a few ineffectual whispered remonstrances, came sheepishly forward. 'You're in the old nest again, Uncle Dicky,' he began, then coughed. 'Us three chaps were in the "Silver Bowl" just now, when Jacob Corye came, mighty took-on about the loss of his money through the break of the Duchy Bank. He told us as how you had lost everything—as you'd put all the fortune you had into the Duchy, and took it out of calves and bullocks. I reckon it were a mistake. Keep your money in flesh, say I. I once lost a power of money in law. I never went to law again after that. It taught me a lesson, and I've profited by it. That is why I've money now. You may lose a calf here or a cow there of milk-fever, or a horse with the glanders, or a pig with the measles—and talking of that, my wife's cruel bad wi' erysipelas—but you've other things to fall back on. It is not so with a bank; that's like the bridge in the nursery story, which when it bended, there the story ended. Well, old friend, we—that is, Ephraim Bonithon, and Tony Hoskins, and I, was very troubled when we heard you had got pixy-led in Queer Lane; so, when Corye was gone, we put our heads together. Now, us three—that's Tony Hoskins, and Ephraim Boniton, and I—have all of us got money laid by, are warmish men in our way—the thermometer in us don't go down to zero. So we've come to say, if you want to get on in the cattle business and are pinched to start with again, we three—that is to say, me, and Ephraim Bonithon, and Tony Hoskins—be ready to stand security for you to any sum in reason that you like to name.—And,' continued Tregurtha, 'don't you never go for to think and suppose of selling Red Windows.

Us of St. Kerian be proud of that house standing up above the town, and us shows it to the little 'uns as a visible lesson to 'em of what uprightness and energy and perseverance may perform. Moreover—and besides'—he took breath after this word—'us three men, the afore-in-mentioned Tony Hoskins, and me, and Ephraim Bonithon, can't abear to think of them seven shining and adorning beauties, your sweet maidens, God bless 'em! should not be housed in a nest worthy of such treasures. Then therefore and because'—another long breath—'if the creditors dare to sell that there house over your head, then we three—that is, Ephraim Bonithon, Tony Hoskins, and I, say—damn their eyes! And we'll buy the house and make it over to you, to repay us as you earn the money.' Then he drew a long breath and said 'There!' and the other two drew the backs of their hands across their noses and grunted 'There!'

Then suddenly, panting, in the doorway stood little Lettice, who cried: 'O father! come, come quick! Who do you think is come to Red Windows? The bishop and Mrs. Sellwood; and they say they are old friends of yours; and want to see you and us all—and are asking after little Bessie. —And,' after panting a while, 'the bishop has brought a to-day's paper, from Launceston, and he says it's all a parcel of lies about the Duchy Bank; it's the other bank, the name I can't call to mind, is broken, and not the Duchy.'

Then Richard Cable held out his hands and clasped and shook those of Ephraim Bonithon, William Tregurtha, and Anthony Hoskins, shook and squeezed them, but said nothing; yet, as he hurried away, his body shook, and his breast heaved convulsively, and sounds issued from his mouth, that made Tregurtha say: 'By George, he is pleased—how he is laughing!'

But Lettice, looking up in her father's face as she ran at his side, asked: 'Papa, why are you crying?'

Then he said in a choking voice: 'Run, Lettice—run after Mr. Corye, and tell him not to fail to send little Bessie and—*her* who is with Bessie, in his gig, to Red Windows, to-morrow.'

CHAPTER LVIII.

PIXY-LED.

'Looky' here, Joshua,' said Mr. Jacob Corye, as his son was getting the trap ready on Thursday, in which to take Josephine and Bessie to St. Kerian. 'As the Duchy Bank isn't broke, you make yourself uncommon sweet to Mary Cable, and tell the father that I'm game to go on with "Champagne Air Hotel."—Lord! what a shock it gave me when I heard the news; and however it got about is a wonder. If folks tell news, why do they always twist it so as to stick in your ribs? I've heard one of the coastguard tell, who was in Burmah, how the natives there run amuck. They get a sword or a spike, or something onpleasant, and they run along as hard as a racer, skewering every one they meet with it. It be just the same in England with folks; if only they get hold of a nasty, sharp, spiky bit of news, they run amuck with that out of pure wickedness.'

'Father, the sky looks ugly.'

'Yes; I reckon we shall have dirty weather; Northern Nannies,[1] maybe, drifts of storm and hail; but they'll pass. —What horse are you putting in?'

'Dancing Jenny.'

'Why dancing Jenny? She cuts capers in the shafts.'

'You had Derby yesterday to ride over to St. Kerian on; and Dancing Jenny wants a run to take the tingle out of her toes.'

'If you was going alone; but with two fragile bits o' womankind, I should say put in Whiteface.'

'Whiteface has no life in him. Leave me alone. Do you think I can't drive? Why, you might set me to manage an Australian buck-jumper, and I'd do it.'

His father shrugged his shoulders. 'Well, put on a honey-face yourself to Mary Caleb, mind you, now that the Duchy Bank is not broke. Get your mother to look at your face before you start, to see that it wears a proper amiable smile.'

[1] A 'Northern Nanny' is a cold storm of hail and wind from the north.

There was no parish or other road to St. Kerian from Pentargon, because Pentargon was a bay, and not a village; and the road along the cliffs as far as where the artery of communication between St. Kerian and the coast entered it, nearly doubled the distance. As the crow flew, and as the track ran for foot-passengers and horsemen, the distance was seven miles; but this lay across moor and between bogs, and only those who knew it could venture along it. The neighbourhood was sparsely populated, and the traffic was small, except along the main turnpike roads. Near the coast, the slate rocks, laden with carboniferous particles that give them a black colour, rise abruptly, but much contorted from the sea; they fall away inland, forming dips, in which are swamps, where rise numerous affluents of the Tamar; and beyond this boggy district extend granite ridges and moors in a chain, forming the spine of the Cornish peninsula. Such population as exists clusters in the valleys and by the sea; the moors are left to solitude and desolation. The short-cut to St. Kerian lay across one of the sedgy, marshy basins in the slate, and then over a spur of granite moor, beneath which nestled St. Kerian in verdure and shelter from the sea-gales.

Mr. Joshua Corye had no idea of going round by the road; the ugly look of the sky made him desirous of getting the journey over as quickly as possible; and Dancing Jenny would be less likely to cut her capers among ruts and swamps than on a broad, macadamised highway.

When the gig was ready, Dancing Jenny began to paw and spring and show the antics that gave her her name; and little Bessie was frightened, and shrank to the side of Josephine.

'Are you wise, Joshua,' said his father, 'putting Jenny in that cart? The shafts are too short for so big a mare.'

'She'll do,' answered Joshua; 'there's no great weight behind.'

'I've put in a keg of "Magpie" ale,' said the landlord. 'There's a confirmation at St. Kerian to-morrow, and perhaps the bishop might like it. He was very partial to it, I mind, when he was here once before—that is, before ever he was a bishop.'

'I didn't reckon on that extra weight,' said Joshua; 'I'll tighten the breeching another hole.'

'You can't do it,' answered his father; 'the buckle is at its furthest.'

'Then take out the keg of ale.'

'It would nigh kill the bishop with disappointment. I know for sure he's got this here confirmation at St. Kerian just to be near where he can taste "Magpie" ale. Whoever heard of one at that place before? I knew by the look of his face, when he was here, that he never enjoyed himself so heartily as tasting "Magpie" ale; and when he'd done, he was off like a long dog [greyhound] home to his missus, t'other side of England, to tell her what stuff we brewed down here.—And now, blowed if he ain't brought his missus to St. Kerian! What for? I ask. Does a bishop want his missus to help him to confirm? I know better; he's brought her into the neighbourhood to taste the "Magpie" ale. And, by George! they shall not be disappointed.'

The old innkeeper helped Josephine into the cart—a tax-cart, that was convertible in many ways, by ingenious arrangement of the seats—and then heaved up Bessie into Josephine's arms. Bessie would sit between the driver and her nurse; or, if she were cramped in that way, on Josephine's lap. Bessie was uneasy at the prancing of the mare, and looked timidly in Josephine's face for reassurance. The latter smiled and appeared to be without alarm, and indeed she had been accustomed to ride and drive since she was a young girl, and was not afraid of a skittish horse.

'Now, then, you kangaroo!' shouted Joshua, standing up, leaning forward, and lashing into Jenny, who bounded away at the touch of the whip, docile, conscious, by the feel of the reins, that they were in the hands of one who understood her and would put up with no nonsense.

'It's a wonderful thing to consider,' said Joshua, 'that there are men who can't see the points in a horse. You show them a good beast and a bad one, and they can't choose between them. It is like having no ear for music; and not knowing whether a chord is in tune or not. Now then, Jenny; none of your tricks! Father is rarely taken up with bullocks and heifers; so is Cable; and I don't deny there's money to be made out of them; but so is there money to be made out of horses. Why should we not go in for horses here? To me, there's something mean in always growing bullocks and heifers; there's no science, no art, no interest about it. But a horse is another thing altogether. You can throw your soul into that.—Do you know this way to St. Kerian, miss?'

'No,' answered Josephine. 'When I came to the "Magpie," I came along the road.'

'That's a distance of twelve miles, or twelve and a half—two sides of a triangle.—I hope you're well provided against wet weather, miss? There's a storm coming on, and we shall be out of all shelter on the moor.'

'We have wraps,' answered Josephine.

The wheels of the trap went noiselessly over turf, and occasionally bounced over a tuft of gorse. There were wheel-tracks here and there, and in some places boggy holes full of black water. The tracks radiated away in different directions—it was hard to say in which they most predominated and indicated the existence of a way.

'One might easily be pixy-led on the moors,' said Joshua, 'and wander for days without finding a house. I've been pixy-led myself round a field. Father had in a fresh brew of "Magpie" ale, and I drank a good deal of it, and then went off to look after a gray I had at grass. The evening was dark; and after I had got into the meadow, I wandered round and about, and about and round, for an hour, and could not find the gate. At last, when I was thoroughly stupid and mad with vexation, I stripped off my coat and turned it inside out, put it on again—and there was the gate before me!—If ever you get pixy-led, mind and turn your jacket. I've heard it spoken of by the old people, often, but never heeded it till that evening, and then I proved it.—Drat it! there comes the storm.'

A roaring, blinding rush of icy wind, laden with hail, and rain as cold as hail, came past. It was so fierce, so loud, so stinging, that Dancing Jenny was frightened or angry, and leaped and backed from it, and then stood stock-still.

'Get along, you crocodile!' shouted Joshua, lashing at the mare.

But a stubborn fit had come on Jenny. They were on an exposed moor, without rock or tree or hedge to break the force of the gale. The hail swept by them in sheets—it spun along the ground; it cut them as if the ice-particles were small-shot. To face the wind would have been impossible. It shook the cart, and threatened to throw it over.

'By Jove!' said Joshua, 'after all, father was right to ballast us with the "Magpie" ale. There's a dip yonder in the moor; we'll down into that, and get under the lee of the hill.—Go on, you blackguardess!' And raising his whip over

his head, he lashed Jenny with all the force of his arm. The mare, alarmed at the roar and force of the storm, stung with the hail on her skin, then tender, as she had been clipped and singed the day before, reared at the blow, and with a snort of anger, dashed away with the trap down the slope. Joshua put the whip between his teeth and held the reins with both hands; the decline became sharp, the wheels danced over the tufts of gorse, tore through brakes of heather, sprang into the air over a node of quartz-rock. 'Just like an Australian buck-jumper,' laughed Joshua—then Jenny was floundering in a bog, and snap—something must have given way. What then ensued, neither Josephine nor Joshua nor Bessie remembered. They had a recollection of a hammering at the splashboard, of a crash; and when Josephine collected her scattered senses, she, clinging to Bessie, and Bessie clinging to her, lay in the marsh, and Joshua some way off, motionless; and Dancing Jenny had kicked the gig to pieces, and was tearing away with the broken shafts dangling at her sides. But Josephine only caught one glimpse of her in a lull of the storm, and then down the moor-gully rushed the hail and rain again, like water pouring out of a sluice in a canal-lock. About her were thousands of white cotton-grass heads lying prostrate before the wind, shivering, bobbing, as though the whole surface were covered with froth from the sea in flakes, or clots of snow. The cart was kicked to merest fragments—a wheel here, another with the axle there, the splashboard torn to shreds, the seat flung into the midst of the swamp, back-rail downwards, and the bottom and sides of the cart as though hacked to pieces with an axe for firewood. The breeching had given way, and the cart had touched the hocks of Jenny, driving the mare, already frightened, into a paroxysm of mad terror.

Josephine's first thought was for Bessie. The child was unhurt, though shaken; and when Josephine rose to her feet, she found that she also had been jarred by the fall, though no bones were broken or cuts inflicted. Her limbs trembled as with bitter cold, and a sickly faintness came over her, that prevented her from gathering together her wits and deciding what was to be done in the emergency. The effort to stand against the wind and hail was more than she could make, and she sank to her knees. 'Lie still,' she said to Bessie, and drew her shawl over the child, to shelter her from the icy blast and needle-pricking hail. Even kneeling, with her side

to the wind, she had hard ado to keep herself from being blown over, and she held to some rushes for support that were tufted with a coarse flower. The gale spent itself, at all events momentarily, and the driving hail seemed to be lifted, as a muslin veil, and beneath it Josephine could see Joshua lying motionless, as she had seen him in the first moment of returning consciousness.

'Will you remain here, Bessie, whilst I go to poor Mr. Joshua? He is hurt badly.' The child gave a sign of consent; and Josephine, half standing, half kneeling, staggered along to the prostrate man. He was unconscious; he had fallen on hard ground, not in the marsh. No blood flowed; therefore, he had not been cut; but she was unable to guess the extent of his injuries. The hail was over his face, thawing with the rain into long trickles; his waistcoat, arms, and legs were capped with an incrustation of ice.

What was to be done? She could not leave him. She could not leave Bessie to run for aid. She did not know whence aid was obtainable. The utmost she could do was to get the cushions of the gig and lay one under his head. Then she went back to Bessie.

'My darling,' she said, 'can you walk?'

'Yes; but not far.'

'We must do our best. The worst of the hailstorm is over. Come with me; we must find some men who can remove Mr. Joshua.'

'But where are they to be found?'

Josephine considered for a moment, standing with her back to the wind, with her hand to her head. She could not go down the valley, because it seemed to be nothing but a wide spreading swamp. To return over the way she had come would be to face the tearing wind, and would be ineffectual, because in coming so far they had not passed a house. The only chance of meeting with human beings was in going forward. Bessie must come with her. She could not leave the child to shiver in the cold beside the prostrate man, who might, for all she knew, be a corpse. So she took Bessie's hand, and encouraged her to step out bravely. The child was frightened, cold, shaken by the fall; but she had a stout heart, and promised to walk and keep up as much as she was able.

She returned up the slope, following the wheel-tracks the trap had made in the spongy soil, to where it had diverged

from a direct course. Then she followed what she believed to be the traces of former traffic, in the presumed direction of St. Kerian. She looked about her. On all sides where she could see, where the passage of the storm had not made a blot over sky and horizon, was undulating moor, with here and there a hump of granite standing up through the moss and turf. Not a sign of the horse; not a trace of human industry. The curlews were screaming, and a flight of gulls overhead winged their way inland. Here and there, some sheep stood, clustered on the lee side of a granite block.

'Halloo, there!'

Before Josephine had seen a man, she was startled by his salutation. Now she saw him, cowering against a piece of rock, gray-habited, of the colour of the stone.

She went to him at once. 'There has been an accident. Only a few yards away, down that hollow, a man has been thrown from his gig and hurt. He is insensible. Mr. Joshua Corye—I dare say you know him.'

'What!—of the "Magpie"?'

'Yes, of the "Magpie."'

'I know him. Is he killed?'

'I do not know. Do go at once to him.'

'I must get help. Where is it?'

She indicated the exact spot. 'I will go with you and show you.'

'No,' said the shepherd; 'you go on with the child to my cot. You can't miss it. Keep right forward; and when you come to the Long Man——'

'The Long Man?'

'Ay, the Long Man—turn sharp to the right, and a hundred paces off you'll find some peat-works; skirt them, and you'll come on my cabin. There's a turf-fire in it. Warm yourself and the child, till we've got Mr. Joshua right. I must go after help, and may be some time away.'

'But—the Long Man?'

'Of course—you know the Long Man of Carnvean. Every fool knows that. Turn to the right at the Long Man—you can't fail. A blind jackass would find the way.' Then the shepherd strode away in quest of help.

That *Man* was the Cornish for stone; and that the Long Man was a stone pillar, a rude primeval granite obelisk, never for a moment occurred to Josephine. She supposed that the shepherd pointed out the way to a fellow-shepherd

who would give her the requisite directions, if she forgot those already communicated. So she went on, holding Bessie's hand, in the course pointed out by the shepherd. Whether she came to the monolith or not, she did not remember afterwards; she was not looking out for one, but for a tall shepherd, and she was not at that moment possessed with keen enthusiasm for prehistoric antiquities. She went on, feeling Bessie dragging more and more at her hand, till the little girl burst into a flood of tears.

'What is the matter, Bessie dear?'

'I cannot go another step—my back hurts me.'

Josephine stood still. What was to be done now? 'The distance cannot be great. We shall find the Long Man soon, and he will carry you. Stay! Will you let me take you in my arms? There; throw your arms round my neck, and cling tightly; lay your head on my shoulder, and I will carry you. It is not for far. We are sure to come to the tall shepherd in a minute.'

But no man was visible, tall or short. Josephine's knees gave way under the weight. She was not strong, and was herself tired and bruised and shaken, and was ill-suited to carry an additional burden to her own weary body. Then, suddenly, they were wrapped in dense mist; it came rolling down on them like a solid wall of white wool; and in a moment they were enveloped, and could not see two paces before them. With the descent of the vapour, every idea of direction was swept away. No distance could be seen on any side; no sky, only a little circle of earth, and that through a drift of whirling watery particles. The sense first produced was one of suffocation, then of chill penetrating to the marrow.

'Bessie,' said Josephine, 'I do not know where to go whilst this fog lasts. I will lay the rug on the ground and wrap you round in it, and wait.'

The child was too frightened and weary to object. Josephine wrapped her round and laid her on the wet moss, and then threw herself down beside her. It was impossible for her to find her way. She would only over-exert herself and fall fainting with her load, if she tried to go on. There was nothing for her to do but wait. The ground was frosted with hailstones, that showed no token of melting. The earth was black as soot, peaty, full of water, that oozed up under their weight—black water, smelling of bog. A stunted growth of

whortleberry grew over it, and rushes; every blade of vegetation dripped with water, where not weighed down with hailstones cemented together. The mist penetrated everywhere; nothing could keep it out. Josephine was wet to the skin; her hands were numbed and aching with cold; her teeth chattered. She rose.

'My dear Bessie,' she said, 'we must make another attempt. There is no token of the fog dispersing. If I could only make out the direction of the wind, it would be some guide. Nothing can be worse than this. Let us make a push on. Now I will try to carry you on my back. I can manage that better than in my arms, at least it will be a change.'

So they struggled on. Josephine was warmed by the exertion; but she soon felt that her strength was not equal to more; and she halted, with shaking knees, and looked about her.

Then Bessie uttered a cry of terror. What was it? Through the vapour loomed a gigantic figure, huge as an elephant. It moved—and in another moment Bessie and her bearer saw a sheep run past them. The fog had marvellous powers of magnifying objects seen through its veil.

'There—there is the cabin!' exclaimed Josephine, and hurried forward—to disappointment. She found a huge pile of granite rocks, weathered into layers like strata of aqueous deposits, moss-covered, split into fragments vertically, and with fallen masses, like tables thrown over and leaning on one another. At all events, some shelter was to be had among these rocks, and Josephine scrambled into a cleft, and took Bessie on her lap and laid her head on her bosom. Her bosom was wet, but it was warm. The little girl moaned, but did not speak. Josephine looked at her face. The eyes were closed. 'Bessie dear?' Then the eyes opened, and shut wearily again.

Josephine sat in the rocky cleft and looked out. The mist drove by like smoke, smoke thick as though the moor were on fire, and the mist had a peaty smell. Where she was, Josephine did not know in the least. Lest she should have gone along westward and strayed far from St. Kerian, farther than when she started, was her fear.

The day was closing in, and closing rapidly. She had a watch, and looked at it, but found that it had stopped when she was thrown from the gig. She was too tired to speak to Bessie. She could not give her hopes, for she could not

frame them herself. If the shepherd came to his hut and found that she wasn't there, he would look for her; but where was he to look? How to find her in such a vapour? She had been hot with carrying Bessie; now, again, she was cold, bitterly cold, and cramp came in her feet and arms. She tried to move; but Bessie uttered a fretful cry, and Josephine, on looking at her, found that she had fallen asleep. She sat on, leaning back on the rock, looking out with stagnant mind at the driving fog, shuddering convulsively at intervals with cold and exhaustion, listening to the sob and wail of the wet wind that played about the rocks and blew through its crevices. The ground fell away below the rocks rapidly, but whither she did not know, and conjectured into a 'clatter'—that is, a ruin of granite masses difficult to thread in open day, impossible in fog and dusk. With every wave of vapour a fresh fold of darkness came on. Night was setting in rapidly.

Many hours had elapsed since either Josephine or the child had eaten anything. Bessie fortunately slept. Josephine was not hungry, but faint. She ached in every limb. So great was her exhaustion, that she had difficulty in keeping her senses from sliding away into unconsciousness. The cold weighed on her like a crown of ice, and she had to summon all her resolution not to fall asleep or faint—she knew not which would ensue.

What would happen if they spent the night on the moor? Would they be alive by morning? For herself, she did not care. All her concern was for Bessie, who was intrusted to her, and for whom she felt herself responsible. She had sinned against Richard Cable so heavily, that if she failed to keep safe and restore sound to him his dear little child, the chance of his forgiving her would be gone for ever. Then she remembered how that often when at St. Kerian she had seen the moor covered with cloud when the air was clear in the valley. The only prospect of life lay in escape from the vapour, and the only possibility of doing that was to descend from the moor.

She was so spent with cold and hunger and weariness, that she was obliged to do battle with herself before she could muster resolution to rise and recommence her wanderings. Her joints were so stiff that she cried with pain as she got out of her sitting posture, in which she had, as it were, hardened; she hardly knew if Bessie were awake or asleep, she was so

silent. Round her neck, Josephine had tied Richard's blue handkerchief, as a protection from the cold, and it hung down in a point behind. She had laid Bessie on the ground before her, between her and the entrance to the rift. She knelt up, and unknotted the kerchief.

'I have been pixy-led,' she said, and sobbed with cold as she spoke; 'I will turn the kerchief.' She held it out above her head, unfolded it, gave it a toss, and reversed it, and replaced it about her shoulders. At that moment the cloud-veil parted before the rocks, and through the falling night she looked down as into a lower world, and in the blackness of a valley that seemed without bottom, saw a twinkle of many points of light. 'One—two—three—four—five—six—seven!' She uttered a gasp of relief, she could not cry. 'Bessie! dearest! Red Windows.'

CHAPTER LIX.

AGAIN: JACOB'S LADDER.

To Richard Cable, broken and softened, the arrival of Bishop Sellwood was welcome. The bishop was staying at the parsonage, and had walked up to Red Windows to see Cable. When Richard arrived at his gate, he saw the bishop in the garden talking to the girls and Mrs. Cable, his kind face beaming with pleasure. He came forward at once to meet Richard, and seeing that something had affected Richard, asked to have a talk with him in the garden-house, instead of going indoors. Then Richard told him frankly all his story, laying most stress on his trouble about Mary, and his fear that he had broken her heart and turned away her affection from him.

'For the matter of that,' said the bishop, 'do not be downcast. The girl is little over seventeen, and though she feels acutely at that age, the feeling is transitory; and before the year is out she will have recovered. It will all turn out for the best. Troubles come on us all, and deepen, where without them there might be shallowness.—And now—about Josephine?'

Then Richard Cable was silent for a few minutes, looking out of the door of his summer-house; but presently he drew a long sigh and said: 'My lord, will you and Mrs. Sellwood be with us to-morrow evening?'

'I will answer for her and for myself.' Then, seeing that Cable did not desire further to pursue the subject, the bishop said: 'By the way, Mr. Cornellis has played us a nasty trick. He got introduced somehow to Mrs. Sellwood's sister, Miss Otterbourne, quite an old lady, and married her. She was pretty nearly twenty years his senior, and did not survive her marriage long. My boy was to have been her heir; but she had the disposal of her property, and she has bequeathed it all to Cornellis, so my son is left out in the cold. It is of course a bitter disappointment to us, to my wife especially; but—it is all for the best. I hate reckoning on dead folk's shoes; it always leads to disappointment; and in this case I really believe it likely to do good, for Captain Sellwood has been somewhat inert, as he had this Bewdley estate to fall back on. Now, he is thrown on his own resources, and roused to action. Cable—do you remember once how he went over the palings like a greyhound? When roused, he is energetic, but only when roused. This failure of his hopes has woke him up, and he has returned to India, and I believe will distinguish himself there, for he has famous abilities, which only need calling forth.' Then he stood up. 'All right, my friend. Mrs. Sellwood and I will be with you to-morrow evening, honour bright. Wring my neck, if I forget it!'

All next day the Cable girls were busy with the house, decorating it. Their father, full of excitement, urged them on. The bishop was coming to spend the evening with them, and so 'WELCOME' must be written up in letters of green leaves and flowers in the hall. Pots of red pelargoniums and variegated geraniums must be set about to decorate the entrance. A good supper must be prepared, and plenty of lights got ready.

'Let us have all the lamps and candles that can be spared set round the entrance hall,' said Richard; 'and then, with the flowers and green leaves, it will look bright and welcoming. And—girls, mind you all put on your white confirmation dresses. You are to be confirmed to-morrow; but you must wear them also this evening.'

'Bessie is not here.'

'Bessie will be here.—Mother, mind that her white dress

be laid out for her ready, and also that other white dress of satin you spoke to me about.'

'When will Bessie be here?'

'I cannot say.—Do you hear what a storm is raging? Mr. Joshua Corye is going to drive her over, and you do not suppose that he will bring her till the worst of the weather is past. If she arrives in the afternoon, it will be well.'

The afternoon passed, and she did not arrive. Towards nightfall, a boy arrived on a moor-pony, without saddle, with a message. 'Please—Mr. Joshua was thrown out of the tax-cart, and took up insensible. He's better, and eating and drinking hearty-like now.'

'Well—and is there no further message?'

The boy looked stupid. 'Can't mind what it was,' he said. 'I lost my cap; I couldn't hold the pony in.' He was capless, with his hair flying as shaggy as the mane of the pony. The rest of the message had been blown away with his cap.

Then Richard Cable, impatient, but hardly uneasy, went to his stable and harnessed his cob into a trap he had, and just as he was about to start, the bishop came up. After a hasty explanation, Dr. Sellwood said: 'Give me a hand, Cable; I will come with you; I want to tell of a plan my wife and I have formed.'

Cable helped the bishop in. 'There will be room for all,' he said, and whipped the horse.

'I want you to let Mrs. Sellwood carry Mary off,' said the bishop. 'She is a dear sweet girl; and just now is better away from St. Kerian. I hinted something of the sort to her, and a twinkle came into her face. There is nothing like change of scene and association for curing a heartache. Bless me! Cable, troubles are like stiles—made to be got over. She shall spend a month or six weeks with us; and you will see, when we send her home to you, she will have freshened up like roses after rain.' The same good considerate man as bishop as he had been as rector.

'You are very kind,' said Cable, readily touched in his present mood—'every one, indeed, is kind; I alone seem the one who has been hard and harsh.'

Richard Cable drove by the road, because he could spin along it at a fast trot; whereas over the moor, with night closing in and with a fog gathering, he would not venture. By the time he reached the 'Magpie,' night had set in; but

the effects of the storm were dispersing, the mists were clearing, and the sky shining, with its many stars.

'Well,' said Cable, drawing up at the 'Magpie' door, 'where are they?'

'What?' asked Corye, coming out. 'Are they not with you?'

Then only did Cable learn the whole story of the accident. Joshua was better; he was put to bed, but vowed he would be up and take a ride next day.

'He's got such a constitution!' explained his father. 'He's been brought up on "Magpie" ale.'

'But—where are Bessie and the other one?'

'That is more than I can tell. They sent Zackie Martin the shepherd after my Joshua, and walked on themselves towards St. Kerian.'

'But they have not arrived.'

'Lord bless you! they are there by this time. Did you not pass them? Which way did you come?'

'By the road.'

'Well, that accounts for your missing them. They went the short way over the moor.'

'But Bessie could not walk so far. Where did the accident take place?'

'This side of the Long Man. Zackie told them the way and how to reach his hut, where there was a fire; but, I reckon, they tired of waiting and went on.'

'They have not arrived. Bessie could not walk so far.'

'Go home over the moor; you'll find them at Red Windows, sure as boys go to stables.—It's a mercy my Joshua wasn't more hurt. He was quite stupid for an hour.'

Nothing more was to be got out of the innkeeper. Cable became seriously alarmed. He asked for a light for his lamps, and started over Carnvean Down. He knew the way; he had ridden it and driven it scores of times. He was silent now, and the bishop respected his anxiety. Trails of fog still drifted over the high moorland, but they were speedily passed through; they were lifting in the cold night-air. Occasionally, Cable shouted, but received no answer.

'There is the Long Man,' he said, pointing with his whip to the stone, that rose about sixteen feet above the turf. 'If they are wandering anywhere about, they will see the lamps; we must not go too fast.' Nevertheless, ever and anon Richard urged on the horse. He was nervous; he did not

know what to think, whether they were lost on the down or had pressed on. 'You see,' he said, 'Bessie could not go fast. *She*—that other—must tarry for her; so we may find them at home. I should have wished to have been there to meet them.'

They were an hour crossing the moor. As they came to the descent—'Look!' said Richard. 'Before I started, I told them to light a candle in every window upstairs. One, two, three, four, five, six—seven lights.'

'Yes, I see; quite an illumination,' said Dr. Sellwood.

'And I told them to have a blaze of lamps and candles in the hall, that when they came in and out of the dark, it would be to welcome light and warmth. Please God they are safe!'

'Amen!' responded the bishop.

When they came to the gate, which was open, Cable fastened his horse to it. 'I will not take him out till I know they have arrived,' he said, and walked on over the gravel path to the foot of the flight of stone steps that led to the front door. Then, all at once, he, going before the bishop, uttered a cry, and stood still.

'What is the matter?' asked Dr. Sellwood, pressing forward.

They saw in the dark a black heap at the foot of the steps.

'It is they—it is they! They are dead!' cried Richard, quite unmanned and beside himself.

Then the bishop ran back to the tax-cart, and removed one of the lanterns, and came with it hastily to where the heap lay. Cable was as one frozen to the ground, unable to act through overwhelming terror and sorrow. The bishop knelt, and drew back a thick shawl; then the light of the lamp fell on the face of a child, and the child moved, uttered a moan, opened its eyes, and turned them away again.

'It is Bessie!' groaned Cable.

'She is alive,' said the bishop. He gently disengaged her from the arms of Josephine, and for a moment laid her on the ground, then he felt the pulse and looked at Josephine. Then he took up Bessie again, and said in a low, shaking voice: 'Cable—I will carry the child in. She is in no immediate danger. It is other with Josephine—your wife. I must get your mother to bring her a cordial at once. There is hardly any pulse, scarcely breath left. She is sinking from over-exhaustion; and I do not know whether she will live or not.

You stay by her; you alone can save her. The soul is fluttering on her lips to depart; try to stay it.—I will send for a doctor; but her fate will be settled one way or the other before he comes.' He had set the carriage lantern against the first step; the end, unperceived by him, was on the shawl, and as he lifted Bessie, he drew the shawl away and upset the lantern, which was extinguished. Holding the little crippled girl in his arms, he ascended the flight of steps and struck at the front door, that flew open; and he was dazzled with the blaze of many lights and the sight of the young girls standing there all in white. 'My dears,' he said, 'I have Bessie; she is safe. Your father is below; he wants light.—Quick! Go to him, and—and kiss your *mother*.' Then he pushed past them with his burden, calling for Mrs. Cable.

Below, in the darkness, at the foot of the flight of stone steps that led up to the house, was Richard Cable, half-kneeling, half-sitting, staying up Josephine in his arms, holding her to his heart, trembling, sobbing, crying out of the depths of his heart to God to help him. Then, in choking voice, with a struggle to force the tones, as he held the hardly conscious form in his arms, he began to sing the melody—not the words, which he did not know, but the air of the Mermaid's song, swaying her to the cadence of the tune, as if she were a babe he was hushing to sleep. Was he lulling her to her eternal sleep? Was she dying in his arms? O! Infinitely precious, unspeakably dear was she to him now, that he seemed about to lose her. All the suppressed love for her, the love driven back by his iron will, returned and rolled through heart and veins as the bore in the Severn. Still he sang on, with broken voice, the Mermaid's air. And as he thus sang and swayed her, down the stairs from the brilliantly illumined hall came the six girls, all in white, and each carried a light—Mary first, then Effie, then Jane, Martha next, and Lettice, lastly Susie. In their haste to obey the bishop and to assist their father, each had caught up a light; and so, each carrying a light, in the still air, under the stars of night, the six girls in white came down the steps to where their father held the exhausted Josephine. They came round her, each holding her light. Josephine opened her eyes feebly, scarce conscious that she saw aught; then Mary stepped timidly up to her and kissed her, and passed on; then Effie, and she went by; and Jane kissed her, stooping, and holding her light; and Martha next; and after her, Lettice; and last of all, little Susie.

Did Josephine recall an evening in the cottage at Hanford, when Cable had bidden his children—the same six—walk round her, in the sunlight, and not approach, not touch her? No; her mind was too dead with exhaustion to remember aught.

But Josephine's eyes opened wide; the soft warm kisses of the children and the light roused her failing spirit, and the open eyes looked, no longer with the glaze of death on them, but with a far-away, searching, earnest longing—*upwards*, into the dark sky, set with ten thousand points of light.

'Josephine!' said Richard Cable—'Josephine!' It was the first—the only time he had uttered her name since they parted on the night that he sought her at Brentwood Hall.

She did not answer. She had not strength to answer; but a slight movement was visible on her lips; and as the children stood with the circle of light round her, and Cable looked down into her white upturned face, he saw water rise in the eyes that had been dry, and brim them, and run over the long lower lashes, but—they never fell, for he stooped and received them on his lips.

Then the bishop appeared with something Mrs. Cable had given him for Josephine to take, whilst she attended to little Bessie. 'She may be carried in now,' said Dr. Sellwood. 'Richard has brought her back from the brink of the grave.'

CHAPTER LX.

TWICE MARRIED.

'And now, sir—I mean, my lord—I shall venture to ask you to marry me again,' said Richard Cable to the bishop, the evening after the confirmation.

'Good gracious, Cable!' Dr. Sellwood started.

'Well,' said Cable in his leisurely, resolute way, 'now that Josephine is recovering, I should like to be married again.'

'Married again!' Dr. Sellwood's rosy face became mottled.

'Well, my lord,' said Cable, 'you see—before, it was Josephine married me; and now, *I* want to marry *her*.'

'But you are married. It can't be done.'

'Why not? It is not bigamy, is it, to be married twice to the same woman?'

'Bigamy—good gracious!—it looks something like it; and etymologically——'

'I beg your pardon, sir—I mean, my lord—I do not understand.'

'According to the derivation of the word from the original Greek, it does make it a case of bigamy.'

'But I cannot be punished for it—can I?'

'No; hardly that.'

'Or you for marrying me again?'

'No; hardly.'

'Then bigamy or no bigamy, I wish to be remarried.—You see, it will be good several ways. Folks at St. Kerian never knew that Josephine was my wife; and they would ask questions and talk, and want to worry out all our past troubles and differences, if I were simply to declare we had been married, but separated. Whereas, if we get married here, in the church, publicly, no one will think to ask any questions, and there will be no nose-poking into the past, to cause Josephine and me annoyance.'

'There is something in this.—I will turn it over in my head. Of course, the registers could not be used, but the ceremony.—I will write and ask my lawyer.—How is little Bessie?'

'Failing,' said Cable. 'I am about, I suppose, now to build up anew my domestic life, and I have laid the foundation in my first-born, and shall set up the gates in my youngest.'

'As for Mary,' said the bishop confidently—'no such thing. She'll get over this matter much more speedily than you imagine, and not a bit of her love to you will be lost. Take my word for it, all will come right in the end. You are going to lend her to us for six weeks.'

'Why!' exclaimed Richard; 'Good gracious me! it must be for another reason.'

'What must be?'

'My bigamy.'

'Why? What is the second reason?'

'All is prepared for it—to the bridesmaids' dresses. My daughters have their confirmation garments, and Josephine her white satin wedding gown, laid out upstairs all ready.'

. . . . . .

Two years have passed. Richard Cable is the Richard Cable of old in gentleness, tenderness; all the sullenness and bitterness have passed away completely. But he is not the Richard Cable of old altogether, for there is a refinement of

manner about him which he lacked when our story began and we first encountered him. But Josephine is very much altered from the Josephine with whom we made acquaintance on the lightship, now full of love and forbearance, and that ineffable sweetness and charm which only self-conquest and suffering can give.

'Richard,' said she one morning at breakfast, 'what is to be done?—Now that my poor father is dead, and the death was very sudden, Bewdley comes to me. I am continually coming in for estates to which I have no right.'

'Do you remember how the bishop told us we were to cease knocking our heads together about Hanford? Now we have that, we do not want more.'

'No; I have no right to Bewdley. I shall make it over to Captain Sellwood, just as I made over Hanford to you.'

'Perhaps he will act as I did.'

Josephine sat dreamily opening the letter just arrived by post. All at once her interest was aroused, her colour mounted, and her eye sparkled.

'What is it, Josephine?'

'This difficulty settles itself.'

'How so?'

'Look, Richard! Here is a letter from Mrs. Sellwood.'

'How is Mary? When is she coming back? She spends half her time with the Sellwoods.'

'Look, Richard!—Mrs. Selwood—— But do read, dear Richard.' She sat looking eagerly in his face as he deciphered the not very intelligible writing of the bishop's wife. Then his colour came, and his eyes sparkled.

'Well,' said Josephine, 'does it not settle itself?'

'Not at all. Bewdley is yours, and Mary is my daughter.'

'Nonsense, Richard. There is no mine and thine between us, but all things are in common.—What do you say?'

'The bishop was right. Mary is consoled for the loss of Walter Penrose.'

'He is right. He always said: All will turn out well in the end.'

'And what can be better than that Captain Sellwood, who has come back from India, should have *our* dear Mary, and with her, that *we* should give him Bewdley?'

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